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ABSTRACT

This eighth chapter in "The Challenge of Counseling in Middle Schools" contains five articles on the organization of a middle school counseling program. "The Counselor and Modern Middle-Level Schools: New Roles in New Schools," by Paul George, examines characteristics of successful schools and considers some new roles for the counselor. "Teacher Based Guidance: The Advisor/Advisee Program," by John Arnold, describes a well-conceived advisory program consisting of a teacher meeting with 12 to 20 students on a regular basis to engage in activities that nurture social and emotional growth. It presents the rationale for the program, discusses the roles of the advisor, and describes group activities. "A Mentor Program for Beginning Middle School Counselors," by Sandra DeAngelis Peace, suggests a new induction model well-conceived advisory program consisting of a teacher meeting with 12 to 20 for counselor mentor programs that addresses the concerns of middle school counselors during their first year of employment. "Focus on Improving Your Middle School Guidance Program," by James Costar, helps readers to clarify the purpose of their guidance programs. A developmental approach to guidance is provided, ways to design and revitalize guidance programs are suggested, and the roles of various school personnel in the guidance program are defined. "A View From the 'Right': Who Needs School Counseling and Guidance Programs, Anyway?", by Sidney Simon, lists "tongue-in-cheek" reasons for eliminating school counseling programs and dramatically illustrates the importance of counselors in the lives of young people. (NB)

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# Chapter 8

# The Challenge of Organizing a Middle School Counseling Program

In his thought provoking article, "The Relevant Counselor," published in *The School Counselor* in 1986, Edwin Herr concluded:

> ...because there are so many needs for counselors' skills and so many different ways in which school counselors have demonstrated their effectiveness in schools across the country, the problem is how to avoid holding them responsible for so many diverse expectations in any given setting that their effectiveness is diluted. (p. 13)

The challenge for middle school counselors is to develop focused programs that meet specific developmental needs of young adolescents. Much like the students they serve, middle school counselors must develop their own professional identities which are expressed in well defined and accountable school guidance programs. This chapter discusses issues related to counseling program development in middle schools and suggests ways to create and manage counseling programs that help youngsters in the difficult transition from childhood in elementary school to adolescence in high school.

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This chapter concludes with a provocative article by Sidney Simon which lists "tongue-in-cheek" reasons for eliminating school counseling programs:

1. "The American family has never been stronger."
2. "...alcohol and drug use among students is at an all-time low."
3. There are no reliable statistics showing that students "are committing suicide or have suicidal tendencies."
4. No student comes to school as "a victim of child sexual abuse anymore."
5. "Without the problems generated by peer group pressure, who needs to pay the salaries of counselors?"
6. "Boys and girls today do not even seem to be curious about sexuality, and with this curiosity gone, none of the girls get pregnant."
7. "Because there are no more alcoholics, there cannot be any children of alcoholics in the schools...."
8. "Children no longer drop out of school."
9. "There are no children with weight problems."
10. "All of the adults who serve children work together cooperatively."

Simon's article is a fitting conclusion to a book intended to help middle school counselors recognize why their services are essential to adolescents trying to answer the question, "Who am I?"

# The Counselor and Modern Middle-Level Schools: New Roles in New Schools

**Paul S. George**

When I was a boy, living in a small mining town outside Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, my parents, aunts, uncles, and other members of my family and my community were proud of the schools. They were convinced that America had won the war, not because of the bomb, but because of the steel that came from the mills and the students that came from our schools. It was a time of great confidence and affirmation. America was on top of the world. Then, on October 4, 1957, during my junior year in high school, the world's first satellite (Sputnik) shot into orbit and a hundred years of American confidence were destroyed. It has been getting worse every year since then. Today, American citizens are convinced that, whether it is steel or students, tractors or testing, the product just is not as good as it used to be.

The current criticism of education reached its zenith in 1983, with publication of the federal government's *A Nation of Risk* (U.S. Department of Education, 1983), in which American educators were accused of being so incompetent and worthless that their actions came close to being treasonous. In less than half a century, a complete reversal had occurred in American public opinion: Schools, teachers, and even counselors had gone from being viewed as the most effective group of educators in the world to being viewed as treasonous and incompetent.

In response to this caustic criticism, educators have mounted incredible efforts to improve the schools or to demonstrate that public schools are far better than the citizenry has been led to believe. Foremost among these efforts has been the last decade of research in an area that has come to be known as "educational effectiveness." Following a strategy similar to research in business and industry, educational researchers have been searching for the "keys to school productivity and success (cf. Ouchi, 1981; Pascale & Athos, 1981; Peters & Waterman, 1982). Fortunately, they seem to have discovered some very important, critical

factors in school success. Today, the results of this research are being read eagerly by public school educators everywhere; hundreds, if not thousands, of school districts are implementing school effectiveness programs based on the research (George, 1983a).

The school effectiveness movement may be one of the most important thrusts in the closing decades of 20th-century education, and it has tremendous implications for the work of school counselors at all levels, especially in middle schools and junior high schools. In this article I explore the results of effectiveness research in corporate and school settings and suggest new roles for school counselors that are congruent with the recent findings.

Much of the related research, in both corporate and academic spheres, is of the kind known as "outlier" studies. That is, if one wants to know what makes a successful corporation, then one ought to examine closely those corporations that have been dramatically successful, those that lie outside the common group. Researchers in the corporate sphere have successfully identified a number of characteristics of exceptionally productive companies, common traits that exist despite the size, location, or product of those firms.

Among the most important common elements of such corporations, sometimes referred to as "Type Z" firms, are:

*Long term employment.* Employees of the most profitable companies often spend their lives working for only one or two different employers. Executives in these industrial groups tend to start at the bottom of a company and work their way up in the same company.

*Stable, supportive, social situations.* A strong brand of egalitarianism complements the sense of community felt within the company. Regardless of the size of the firm, employees often spend much of their personal family lives associated with the families of other company employees.

*Holistic view of persons.* Management tends to think of the employees of the company as "associates" rather than as common workers. The individual employee is given attention in ways unmatched in other corporations. For example, Type Z companies tend to have fringe benefit programs in areas such as health, leisure time, and education that far outdistance those in competing companies.

*Individual responsibility plus teamwork.* Highly productive American corporations allow for plenty of individual effort and reward, and they also organize in ways that demand teamwork on common projects that go beyond each individual's specialty.

*Participatory decision making.* Each individual has a voice, at the appropriate level, in the decisions affecting his or her life in the company.

*Development of interpersonal communication skills.* Because people in these companies spend their lives together working closely on common projects, they must learn to communicate and cooperate effectively. Corporations that break profit and production barriers invest thousands of dollars on training to help employees develop their interpersonal skills.

*Common goals.* Perhaps the most significant characteristic of these highly profitable companies is that the employees share a concept of the purpose of the company in the corporate world and in American society. These firms tend to value service, quality, and people above the concern for profit that seems to be the sole motivating force in less successful corporations.

*Strong leadership.* Leaders who believe in the company, love the product and the employees, and can manage and motivate groups of people are always present at the forefront of the most productive corporations.

Researchers in the area of school effectiveness have also been able to identify a number of common characteristics of successful schools, regardless of where the schools are located, the size of the schools, or the socioeconomic backgrounds of the students. The late Ronald Edmonds (1979), one of education's first proponents of the effectiveness concept, stated that directly as a result of this research, "We can, whenever and wherever we choose, successfully teach all children whose schooling is of interest and we already know more than we need to know to do so" (p. 15). Edmonds and other researchers developed lists of the characteristics of those schools that have demonstrated that they are more productive, academically, than predictions made for them based on the characteristics of the homes from which their students came. Schools that make a significant difference in the academic lives of the students have:

- A safe and orderly environment
- A clearly articulated sense of mission
- A climate of high expectations for student learning
- Strong instructional leadership
- Frequent monitoring of student progress

- Effective instruction
- Good home and school support systems

A more detailed description of the characteristics of effective schools and highly productive corporations (George, 1983a) reveals that successful institutions have much in common. Productivity and success seem to emerge from common themes, regardless of the type of institution. One of the most striking similarities is the common emphasis on the persons involved in the process. The leaders of highly successful institutions, whether involved with steel or students, recognize the worth and dignity of the human beings who are at the heart of the process. Productive corporations and successful schools both recognize and deal with the wholeness of the persons who are so important to the mission of the institutions.

For school counselors, the implications of this common focus are almost infinite. In the business world, for example, large companies devote significant resources to what once was called personnel and is now more often referred to as human resource development. Huge sums are funnelled into the effort to improve productivity by developing employees as workers and as persons. On the other hand, school systems have a reputation for giving lip service to human resource development but supplying few resources for the effort. As a result, in many schools the school counselor may be the only person who recognizes the need to focus on the students' personal development as well as on their academic achievements.

## Characteristics of Successful Schools

School counselors need to be aware of some important shifts that have been occurring in the affective emphasis of American middle schools. For most of the last 20 years educators in many middle schools have focused on the uniqueness of each learner by developing programs that stress individualization (George, 1983b). More recently, these same educators have begun to recognize that middle graders have another great need, in the affective area: They need to learn how to become effective group members (Lipsitz, 1984).

Successful schools for middle graders—those that meet important criteria in both the academic and affective development of these students—have begun to work toward meeting the dual affective needs

of these students: the need to discover their unique individuality and the need to embrace and become effective members of small and large groups for the rest of their lives (Lipsitz, 1984). Counselors who care about the work in schools for middle graders must respond to and facilitate the accomplishment of these goals. The results of effective-need research in the corporate and educational spheres indicate that effective schools for middle graders need to incorporate the following five fundamental principles in their programs.

## Common Mission

Schools that are successful in offering balanced programs that meet both the academic and affective needs of middle graders tend to be very similar to each other. These schools may be different sizes, in different locations, and have different names, but their programs and organization are often dramatically similar. Such schools have educators who share a common sense of mission about the importance of education for middle graders and the special nature of children at that age.

## Program Alignment

Effective middle schools offer programs that are congruent with this vital philosophical commitment. If the philosophy of the school stresses the need for mastery of the basic skills, then the program offers sufficient means for the goal to be accomplished. If the philosophy of the school stresses the importance of improving the self-esteem of middle graders, then the school takes a proactive stance in designing opportunities for this to happen. If the mission of the school includes the need for exploration in the curriculum, then the program schedule makes such options easy to exercise. The school's program becomes a concrete expression of the staff's philosophy.

## Inspired Instruction

Educators in schools that offer inspired instruction are able to identify and employ teachers and others who agree with the school's mission and are capable of implementing the program in their classrooms and elsewhere. Inspired instruction is manifested in ways that result in students learning what the school and the community have decided they should learn. Members of the school's staff begin with the confidence

that they can be successful, even with the most difficult and challenging students in the school. They believe their goals are extremely important and work diligently to accomplish them.

### Group Involvement

Successful programs are organized in ways that result in almost every student and staff member believing that they are important members of very important groups. Large schools are organized so that students are provided with the opportunity to belong to small groups within the larger school. Vital subgroups are created in which an "ethos of caring" emerges. Students come to view themselves as members of the same team as the teachers; rather than being on opposing sides, they are together, pursuing the same purposes. Teams, advisory groups, schools-within-the school, and other similar arrangements unite teachers and students in ways, and for longer periods of time, so that a genuine sense of community begins to develop.

### Spirited Leadership

The final ingredient for successful middle schools is spirited leadership. Winning schools, like highly productive corporations, are led by administrators, counselors, and teachers who have decided that the school is the best avenue they have for making a difference in the world. These leaders have a vision of what makes schools successful and they are capable of inspiring other members of the staff to move toward the same goals. They are people who love schools for middle graders and the students in those schools. Such educators enjoy being close to the action, and their involvement demonstrates both their commitment and skill. They are instructional leaders who are respected by other staff members for what they can do as well as what they say. Lastly, spirited leaders have the capacity to manage groups of professionals in ways that move the school toward realizing the mission on which they have all focused.

The education of middle graders in American schools has entered a new phase. A great deal more is now known about how to accomplish the goals of the school, and educators have come to understand how much more important, and how complex, is the affective component of this educational process. What roles will effective school counselors perform in these effective schools for middle graders? How can counselors help the staff and the students move toward the realization of the

goals they all embrace? Will school counselors be important people in such schools?

## New Roles for the Counselor

Even though educators have isolated the characteristics of successful schools for middle graders and have arrived at a new professional consensus about the important role of the affective component in such schools, there is much more to the success of such schools. Educators have also discovered that creating new schools that manifest the characteristics of highly productive institutions is not automatic, nor is it easy. Effective schools do not just appear magically, like Athena from the forehead of Zeus. It is much easier to find such schools than it is to create them by transforming unproductive schools into successful ones.

Although educators are not able to state, conclusively, which ingredients are the most important to school success and which must precede the emergence of the others, most educators seem to believe that the leadership factor is the crucial characteristic that stimulates the growth of the others. I contend that most schools have not moved swiftly and naturally to a place where they can demonstrate increased success partly because school counselors have not played an important schoolwide role in this area. Unfortunately, many current school administrators (principals and assistant principals) are too often not naturally inclined to value or even recognize the necessary ingredients for success when those ingredients are not part of the budget or schedule. In all fairness, it is also likely that today's school administrators are so harried that they do not often have nor realize the need to take the time to implement success-oriented innovations. School administrators are not always affectively oriented people.

There is, then, in many schools that are less successful than they might be a vacuum of leadership skills and attitudes. School administrators do not naturally recognize the required ingredients, and school counselors have been so busy with other legitimate activities that they, too, are often uninvolved. It is also possible that school counselors have not viewed themselves as legitimately involved in school reorganization and revitalization. Many counselors have recognized the typical school for what it too often is—an affective desert—and have retreated to their counseling spaces where they have attempted to create an affective oasis, one spot in the school where students can come for affective refreshment.

Unfortunately, in most schools the ratio of counselors to students often results in a situation in which only a few students—those dying from affective thirst—find their way to the oasis and the growth and renewal it can provide. Hundreds, sometimes even thousands, of other students pass in and out of the school without ever having had contact with the counselor. Although these students might not have been in crises, their school lives may have been significantly less meaningful than they might have been had they had the opportunity for contact with a counselor.

School counselors must assume a new set of schoolwide roles. These roles should fit the need for what might be called an "educational ombudsman"; that is, one person in the school who assumes the responsibility for ensuring that fundamental program components are implemented successfully. For schools to become more effective they must become more affective, and the school counselor is the person most likely to be successful in stimulating schools to move in this direction. Some might argue that, considering the current status of counseling in the schools, it would be impossible for counselors to find the time and energy to accept and act in these new roles. I believe that when the critical nature of the school counselor's role in school improvement becomes apparent, counselors will find a way. And, when others in the school and the community observe the results of these new activities, counselors will be viewed as far more essential to school success than they are often perceived to be.

What are the new schoolwide roles that only counselors can do well? What does an educational ombudsman look like and act like? What will the school's official affective advocates be doing in the next few years if they accept the burden of schoolwide improvement? Counselors must, of course, think of themselves and their roles in significantly different ways. In the age of "high tech," as schools move more closely to becoming supervised correspondence courses and as students now interact with computers instead of mimeographs, counselors must become the skilled technicians of the "high touch" (Naisbitt, 1982) response. How can this be accomplished?

## Nurturing the School Mission

First, the school counselor in today's successful schools for middle graders must participate more vigorously in forming a new vision of

what those schools can and should accomplish. No one else in the school is more attuned to those needs of middle graders that require a more potent response from the school. No one is more child centered. No one is better able to point out that these students are much more than cognitive beings and that there is no inherent conflict between the need to raise test scores and the need to attend to the affective side of students' lives. And no one else is likely to have the skills of group facilitation and organizational development that will enable the school staff to move together to a new sense of mission. If not the counselor, then who?

## Guiding Program Alignment with the Mission

In most middle schools today, there are few staff members who are charged with what are sometimes referred to as "oversight" responsibilities. It is rare to find a school in which a staff member is identified with the task of seeking balance in the school's curriculum. Consequently, many schools for middle graders are characterized by an imbalance in the curriculum that often excludes, or at least downplays, the importance of anything that is not being measured on achievement tests. The school counselor, whose only vested interest in the affective domain (which few others claim), may be uniquely able to fulfill a role in curriculum coordination from which others shrink.

## Facilitating Inspired Instruction

Middle-level schools are in dire need of staff members who are familiar with the research on teacher effectiveness and who can interpret this research to help teachers realize that there is more to good teaching than what has come to be called "direct instruction." The teaching staff also needs to be encouraged to improve by a colleague who has the values, insights, and skills that permit the teachers to identify and build on their own strengths. The counselor is one of the few people in the school who are trained to observe human behavior closely and to provide feedback carefully, so that such information can become growth producing rather than intimidating and discouraging. Although it may be true that counselors rarely see this role as a part of their professional responsibilities, it is also true that there is virtually no one else in the school who values the professional growth of the staff members enough to make it a high priority.

## Guaranteeing Group Involvement

Who, more than the school counselor, understands the deep human need to be an important part of an important group? Probably many, if not most, of the serious problems counselors deal with at the middle and junior high school level are directly related to students' failure to adapt themselves in ways that permit them to enjoy valid group membership. This is the new role that counselors will find most familiar and most comfortable.

One of the most important programs in the long history of the junior high school-middle school movement has been the teacher-based guidance effort often called the advisor-advisee program. It is both the most popular component of the curriculum of middle-level schools and the most disliked. Ironically, it is sometimes the most valuable use of the school day and at other times a nearly complete waste of everyone's time. It is often the program most attractive to some parents and the most offensive to others. Many of the difficulties advisory programs encounter could be eliminated if school counselors believed that the success of the programs was a very important part of their primary responsibilities in the school.

When teachers resist advisory programs, it is almost always because they do not understand the actual purpose of such efforts. When students dislike the programs, it is almost always because the teachers do not have the interest or skill to conduct the programs successfully. When parents question the programs, it is almost always because they have not been explained clearly to them. In all of these cases, it is the counselor who is likely to be the single, most important resource in the school.

The counselor can help the staff develop a firm rationale for the advisory program and can acquaint new faculty members with the goals of the program on an annual basis because it is the counselor who has the knowledge of resources that teachers can use in their classroom advisory efforts. The counselor is most able to evaluate the success or failure of individual faculty member's efforts to implement the program as well as to evaluate the program on a schoolwide basis. If the counselor does not do all these things, there will be no teacher-based advisory programs for a long time.

There is a growing national consensus that, in addition to advisory programs, interdisciplinary team organization is also a central component of modern middle-level schools. There are few advocates for

having teachers organized according to their disciplines at the middle level. Instead, more and more middle schools and junior high schools are adopting the pattern of interdisciplinary groups, teams, families, or houses, in which teachers share the same students, the same part of the building, and the same schedule, rather than the same subject. Life on interdisciplinary teams is complex and varied, occurring in a number of distinct phases (George, 1982), with special roles for the school counselor to play in each of those areas.

The first phase of team life is the organizational process. Because members of the counseling staff often are most active in scheduling students, they can get the teams off to the right start by scheduling them so that there is a "good" fit between the teachers and the students they teach. That is, it is critical that the teams be arranged so that a group of two to five teachers, in one part of the building, have all the same students in common. This relatively simple act will permit teachers to improve the school experience in a number of ways.

Teachers who share the same students can develop a common program that is considerably more powerful than can one teacher working alone. Common rules on the team, for example, are applied with greater ease because each teacher is being assisted by a number of others who are committed to the same rules for the same students. The counselor can be helpful by working with the teachers to establish reasonable rules with rational consequences that middle graders will perceive as fair. Common headings for written work and homework regulations, along with common notebook formats and other such routine necessities, will make life simpler for students and more rational for the teachers.

For teachers, the most important benefit from being organized into teams is probably that they make parent conferences more pleasant and productive. In many middle-level schools, where teachers face parents alone and are uninformed about the progress or behavior of a student in other teachers' classrooms, such meetings can be difficult and unpleasant experiences for the teacher. When teachers work together on teams, however, they constantly exchange and pool information about the students they have in common. Their individual knowledge about the students on the team grows enormously. In a team conference with parents, this common knowledge of the student can be used in important, productive, and less defensive ways. By working with the counselor who has had proper training in conference skills, teachers and parents both extol the virtues of working together as a team.

Although many teams of teachers stop at this first organizational phase, in which the benefits are primarily for the faculty, other teams can be helped to recognize the virtues of creating a situation in which the students also believe that the team is theirs and that each is an important member of that group. In most middle-level schools, the counselor will be one of the few people who, naturally and without prompting, will be able to see the benefits of taking time and effort to create the sense of community that signifies the second phase of life on teams.

In one school where I observed the transition from departmental organization to team groups, the first phase (organizational) was markedly successful. Teachers developed common rules, held team conferences with parents, and had separate team conferences with individuals and small groups of students. The common procedures they worked out made life much simpler, and because students only had to go to the next door for their next class rather than across the building and back every 45 minutes, hall problems were nearly eliminated. Everything seemed about as good as it could be.

When I asked the students about team life, however, I was surprised to learn that they did not really view the team as theirs. According to the students, organization into teams meant that "the teachers are ganging up on us" or that "the teachers are unionizing against us!" The students did not object to this from the teachers, not at all; they were actually glad their teachers had decided to work together to make school improvements and seemed flattered by the attention. But the team meant little more than that to the students.

Inspired by the school counselor, the teachers on several teams in the school encouraged the students to become team members. With the counselor's help the teachers committed themselves to creating a learning community in which teacher and students could help each other realize the goals of the program. "We're in this together, on the same great team," became the watchwords. Team colors, logo, motto, song, newsletter, and special activities that enhanced the group feeling were developed. Soon students were answering the question "What is a team?" very differently than they had been before. They began to view the group as something small within the much larger school, a group small enough and important enough for them to belong to. It was a place where they could be known, and they liked it. Discipline problems decreased and achievement increased.

Most people think of team teaching when they hear the word "team" in connection with schools. Actually, this phase of team life is important

and no less critical to school success than other components. It is, however, the area in which educators in middle-level schools have made the most mistakes and, therefore has a very negative connotation for many teachers. One of the reasons so many mistakes have been made in this area is that the skills and insights involved in small-group planning are often not well developed in teachers who have spent their lives in classrooms by themselves.

Who is the person in the school who is likely to possess those skills? The school counselor. If school counselors take an active role in training teachers in planning skills and in helping them to realize what they can do together instructionally, middle-level schools can be much more exciting environments in which to learn.

### Belonging to a Spirited Leadership Team

Research in corporate productivity points to the skills of group management as the most critical component of modern leadership. It is not different in productive, middle-level schools. As modern business leaders are learning that employee involvement leads to considerably high productivity, educators are also moving toward a clearer understanding that middle-level schools are so complex that a one-person management process will be much less successful than will participatory decision making. Group planning and participation in decision making are, however, far from quick and easy ways to develop policy or solve school-wide problems. Management processes that are democratically oriented often take much longer and require considerably more attention to the affective side of the lives of those involved than do traditional approaches to management.

School administrators, even those eager to share their power and involve teachers in collaborative decision making, have rarely been trained to accomplish these difficult tasks. The consulting counselor can assist in the collaborative process in ways no one else in the school can. Without the guidance of a counselor skilled in managing groups, many administrators will retreat from the kind of management educators now know will move the school forward. Teachers, of course, also need help in learning how to participate in the decisions that affect their lives, usually even more than many administrators do. The counselor has to be the person in the middle.

## Conclusion

Asking overburdened school counselors to consider new roles for today's middle-level schools will seem, to some, like the situation from the Old Testament when the Egyptian pharaoh commanded Moses to direct the Hebrews to make bricks without straw. Many counselors will say, and correctly, that with a counseling ratio of 500 or more to 1, new roles seem impossible and that counseling bricks have been made without straw for more years than the Hebrews made theirs. Abandoning the affective oasis will no doubt cause a significant number of problems, and donning the cloak of educational ombudsman will not automatically and immediately take up the slack. It is indeed, a difficult transition to make.

If counselors do not voluntarily assume this new persona, however, the consequences for school life in the near future will be ominous. The national obsession with testing, credit accumulation, tracking, and negative thinking as a way of life will move the schools closer and closer to institutions in which human beings are perceived as nothing more than products and in which all of the goals counselors espouse will be imperiled.

If not the counselor, then who?

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# Teacher Based Guidance: The Advisor/Advisee Program

**John Arnold**

The most significant development in middle school guidance over the past decade has been the rapid emergence of teacher-based programs, usually referred to as advisor/advisee (A/A), home base, or advisory programs. Alexander and McEwin (1989) report that 39% of the grades 5–8 and 6–8 schools have such programs, and numerous other schools are planning them. Moreover, George and Oldnaker (1987), in a study of 130 schools widely recognized as exemplary, found that over 90% had substantive advisor/advisee programs. Virtually all authorities on early adolescent education regard A/A programs as a key component of schools which seek to be developmentally responsive.

A well-conceived advisory program consists of a teacher meeting with from 12 to 20 students on a regular basis to engage in activities that nurture social and emotional growth. It provides each middle schooler with an adult friend and guide, a small community who know each other well, and a forum for the issues and concerns of being an emerging adolescent.

## Rationale

In the best of situations, most 11–14 year olds experience difficulties dealing with the rapid and highly variable physical, intellectual and socio-emotional changes that occur during early adolescence. Will I ever grow? Will my zits go away? How can I make friends? How do I get along with people in authority when I can't have my own way? How can I be part of a group and not lose my soul in the process? What's right and wrong? What's worth committing myself to? Am I really okay? These are but a few of the questions that emerge.

In contemporary society, the difficulty of dealing with these issues and questions is greatly exacerbated. The breakdown of the family, drugs and alcohol, child abuse, media exploitation, confused values, etc.—the

whole litany of social problems—mightily work against healthy development. Frequently young adolescents have to make complex decisions from a bewildering array of choices with insufficient parental supervision.

Thus middle school students have profound need for continuing care, support, and guidance. School counselors cannot begin to meet this need by themselves. They are simply too few in number and have too many other duties. Further, most middle schoolers will not seek out a counselor for help under normal circumstances. They find it much more natural to talk to someone with whom they have daily contact. Thus, the teacher-based guidance provided by an advisor/advisee program is essential.

The need for advisory programs is not confined to students. Most adults enter teaching with the hope of getting close to kids, interacting meaningfully with them, and making a difference in their lives. Yet too often they become isolated from students and disillusioned, caught up in an impersonal bureaucracy. An effective advisor/advisee program has the potential to break down barriers and make meaningful student-teacher interaction more possible.

It should be noted that A/A programs are most often associated with houses and interdisciplinary teams in a school organization plan that seeks to create small personal communities within large institutions. For example, a middle school of 900 students might have three houses of 300 students each, three teams of 300 each, and six advisory groups of 16–17 students each. Each component has its own functions and activities; all seek to provide a sense of identity and belonging. Where the components exist in concert, they mutually strengthen one another. This interaction will be noted in several instances in this chapter.

## Roles of the Advisor

When they first learn of A/A programs, some teachers are leery. "I'm no psychiatrist," or "I'm not an expert in moral development," are frequently voiced misunderstandings. While expertise in counseling and values education is of course helpful, it is not essential to becoming a good advisor. The fundamental role of an advisor is simply to be a friend to advisees, that is, someone who demonstrates interest, care, and concern for them.

Advisory sessions are different from regular classes. Respect and order must be maintained, but the atmosphere is more informal. No grades are given; discussions are more wide-ranging; student expression is especially fostered. In many ways, it is a time for teachers and students simply to be themselves and to get to know one another on a personal level. The spirit of being oneself is captured in the story Paul George, a noted scholar on middle schools, tells about an advisor who was an enthusiastic member of the Millard Fillmore Society. For several weeks, he managed to engage his advisees enthusiastically in activities related to Fillmore's birthday. Posters abounded, jingles were written, songs were sung, intercom announcements blared, "Only three more days until Millard Fillmore's birthday." Hokey? Yes. Real? Yes.

Closely related to the role of friend is that of being an advocate for each advisee. Being the adult who knows the student best, the advisor represents the advisee's interests to team members, other teachers, administrators, and parents. Sometimes this may simply require opening lines of communication. At other times it involves explaining or defending an advisee's behavior. On occasion it may necessitate prodding or chiding the advisee in an "I think better of you than that" vein. Above all, it entails providing recognition and support for the advisee. Because the advisor is an advocate, in schools with well developed A/A programs, discipline problems are routinely referred to the advisor.

Thirdly, the advisor serves as a guide for advisees. Academically, this role may involve helping the advisee make course selections, develop better study habits, or find assistance with classwork. Personally, it entails being a good listener, posing alternatives, and generally facilitating decision making. It is obviously crucial that advisors know when to refer advisees with personal problems to the counselor or to a professional in the community. Unless specifically trained, they are not expected to become involved in serious counseling relationships.

Fourthly, the advisor is a coordinator with parents. In elementary schools, parents deal directly with their child's self-contained classroom teacher. In middle level schools, parents too frequently "drop out" because there is no one teacher to whom they can talk who genuinely knows their child. The A/A program provides this missing link. A good advisor is proactive with parents by sending home positive notes, making positive phone calls, and setting up conferences. Also, the advisor is available for discussions initiated by the parent. Depending upon the nature of the issue, the advisee may well be involved in conferences also.

Fifth, the advisor acts as evaluation coordinator for advisees. This role, perhaps the least developed in most programs, has great potential. Because advisors have relatively few advisees, they can meet individually with them to assess progress. In addition, they can engage advisees in goal setting and self-evaluation, activities which are highly important yet so often neglected during early adolescence (Arnold, 1986). The small numbers also allow the advisor, after gathering grades and information from team members, to write narrative comments which address the advisee's total development to accompany report cards.

Finally, and highly importantly, the advisor serves as activity leader and community builder. Here the focus shifts from the individual to the group, with the advisor seeking to promote friendship, group identity, and a sense of belonging. In so doing, the advisor helps the group explore issues and feelings pertinent to adolescent development. The types of activities involved in these pursuits will be discussed in the following section.

## A/A Group Activities

There is an almost limitless number of activities that can be used during A/A sessions. The types selected will depend upon the goals of the program, its structure and schedule, the experience of the advisor, and the specific needs of the students. The following sampling of activities from the Advisory Handbook (1988) of the Shoreham Wading–River Middle School, Shoreham, New York, one of the nation's very finest, illustrates the richness of the possibilities:

- Discuss feelings about being new in a new grade, a new building and with new teachers.
- Discuss current events, a TV show, movie, or event.
- Discuss school problems and student concerns.
- Plan A/A group activities, such as a camping trip, service project, dinner for parents, or outing.
- Discuss school procedures, policies, opportunities, mini-course registration, community service programs, independent study opportunities, getting involved with the artist in residence, report cards, etc.
- Keep group and individual journals.
- Read stories orally or discuss books read.
- Design, invent, and/or play games.

- Cook a group breakfast in home economics class first period.
- Have individual advisees tell of experiences and plans.
- Channel energy in positive ways: lobby for a specific mini-course, change lunch options, develop strategies for changing policies.
- Discuss progress reports with individual advisees.
- Explain and re-explain the what, when, where and how of middle school phenomena.

One of the keys to the long term viability of A/A programs is establishing a balance of activities between those which require considerable planning and those which do not. Already overloaded with five or six classes a day, many teachers feel, "The last thing I need is another daily preparation." Indeed, programs which require extensive daily preparation may be doomed from the start.

Alexander and George (1981) describe a number of worthwhile activities, most of which require relatively little preparation, that can be scheduled on a weekly basis. These include (1) It's Your Day, where the group focuses on an individual advisee's interests for a full session; (2) Uninterrupted Silent Sustained Reading; (3) Uninterrupted Silent Sustained Writing, with content focused upon issues of personal importance to advisees; (4) Academic Advisory, where advisees bring problem work to the group, or do short units on study habits or test taking skills; (5) Indoor/Outdoor Games; (6) Story Time, which involves oral reading and discussion; (7) Career Explo, where adults from the community speak to the group about their careers, and (8) Orientations relative to school policy and events.

Examples of activities which require more extensive preparation include teaching and discussing interpersonal skills, promoting self-esteem, and planning special projects, trips, or celebrations. A number of commercial or already prepared materials are available to help with developmental and interpersonal activities. Perhaps the single best source is *Quest: Skills for Adolescence*, developed by the International Lions Club. *Quest* is a substantive, three-year middle school curriculum whose effectiveness is well documented (Gerler, 1986). Some advantages of using *Quest* are that faculty are being specially trained before they may obtain the materials, and that the activities, designed for 45-minute periods, may be adapted to shorter A/A periods. Two other sources of materials are the *F.A.M.E.* (Finding Acceptance in the Middle School Environment) Program, developed by the Alachua County, Florida School System, and *Prime Times* available from the National Resource Center for Middle Grades Education.

The Public Broadcasting System (PBS) has produced two series of 15-minute, school oriented television programs, "Inside Out" and "Self Incorporated," which are particularly useful. Also, "DiGrassi Junior High" and "Wonderworks" are regular PBS productions which are geared to the needs and interests of young adolescents. Addresses for all these materials mentioned are listed at the end of the chapter.

Some advisors are "naturals" who need little external structure for their activities. The majority, however, especially when programs are just getting underway, can benefit from a set format. Thus many schools have found that a repeating weekly schedule that balances high and low preparation activities works best for them. Such a schedule might be structured as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| **Monday** | Current Events or School Issues |
| **Tuesday** | Development Issues |
| **Wednesday** | Silent Sustained Reading/Individual Conferences |
| **Thursday** | Academic Advisory |
| **Friday** | Group Projects or Developmental Issues |

Other schools schedule activities on a thematic basis. One such example is from Tapp Middle School in Cobb County, GA. (Campbell, 1986).

## Advisement Monthly Themes

| | 6th Grade | 7th Grade | 8th Grade |
|---|---|---|---|
| Aug./Sept. | Get Acquainted | Get Acquainted | Get Acquainted |
| Oct. | Test Taking | Study Skills | Study Skills |
| Nov. | Making/Keeping Friends | Decision Making | Caring |
| Dec. | Community Service | Community Service | Community Service |
| Jan. | Decision Making/ Peer Pressure | Substance Abuse | Decision Making |
| Feb. | Communication | Caring/Manners | Test Taking/Careers |
| March | Who Am I? | Careers | Creativity |
| April | Getting Along with Others | Creativity | Family Relationships |
| May/June | Georgia | Problem Solving | High School Preparations |

This approach can provide a cohesive framework for activities and is appropriate for schools with mature programs.

There are also schools which periodically schedule a number of all-school activities, such as intramural sports, assembly programs, or special events during advisory time. While this strategy can be effective, care must be taken that the integrity of the advisor/advisee program is not violated. Repeated interruptions or breaks in routine can easily devastate a program. All-school events must be known about well in advance and built into the A/A schedule.

## Grouping Advisor and Advisees

For an A/A program to function well, advisory groups need to be as small as possible. Thus virtually every teacher, including unified arts, foreign language, physical education, special education, and library staff serve as advisors in order to reduce the advisor/advisee ratio to under 20:1. Where appropriate, well-qualified aides can also become advisors.

Advisees must be placed carefully with advisors. In some schools, advisees have considerable say in their placement, though they cannot be guaranteed their first choice. In other schools, advisors exercise a choice of advisees. Administrators, counselors and/or an advisory committee usually make final placements, taking into account student, parent and teacher preference, friendship patterns, potential discipline problems, and space available.

In teamed schools, it is very important that advisors be assigned advisees who belong to their team. Thus a group of 100 students might be assigned to six team teachers, four core academic and two "special" teachers affiliated with the team. In this framework, the behavior, development, and progress of each advisee can be systematically discussed on an ongoing basis during team planning time by a group of teachers who instruct them daily (Arnold, 1981).

There are three basic patterns for grouping advisors and advisees over time, with the over-all structure of the school often determining which option is chosen. The most common pattern is to have grade level advisories which change advisors each year. The make-up of the group itself may or may not change. This grouping is advantageous in schools with grade-level teams, assuring that advisors teach their advisees. A second pattern is for the advisor to keep essentially the same advisory group for three years. This configuration has the potential for developing

very strong advisor-advisee relationships and group cohesion. A third pattern is for the groups to have a multi-grade make-up, where an advisory might consist of an equal number of sixth, seventh and eighth graders who remain with the same advisor for three years. This approach also builds strong relationships and potentially reduces age-based pecking orders in schools. The last options are particularly appropriate for schools with multi-grade houses and/or teams.

## Scheduling Options

It is essential that A/A periods be scheduled on a regular basis and be long enough for significant interaction to take place. Most successful programs have sessions of 25 minutes or longer; in those with shorter time allotments, the advisory tends to become a glorified homeroom/ study hall period.

There are a number of possible scheduling options, with the choice dependent upon program goals and over-all school organization, especially its master schedule. Among the four most prevalent are: (1) daily, full group meetings; (2) three times a week, full group meetings, with mini-courses or activities the other two periods; (3) a relatively short full group period daily, with individual advisor-advisee conferences scheduled during lunch, independent study time, study hall, or before or after school; (4) scheduling left to the discretion of teams, who have time added to their block schedule for advisory purposes (Alexander and George, 1981).

Combinations of scheduling options are of course possible. The building of Shoreham-Wading River Middle School, for example, was designed purposefully without a lunch room so that A/A groups could eat lunch together. The mixed-grade advisory groups also meet at the beginning of each day. In addition, at the instigation of the faculty, advisors meet individually with each advisee once a month for a 45-minute breakfast, usually at the McDonald's across from the school.

Time of day is another important consideration. An A/A program should not be scheduled at the end of the day unless it is an additional, brief "wrap up" time. Both advisors and advisees are tired at this time, and such scheduling conveys a negative message about the program's importance. Just before lunch is usually not a good time either, though combining A/A with part of the lunch recess can provide flexible time

for intramurals and other all-school activities organized around advisories.

In the writer's experience, programs scheduled on a daily basis for 25-30 minutes the first thing in the morning tend to work best for most schools. This scheduling sets a tone and orients students for the day, deals immediately with out-of-school experiences students are eager to share, and emphasizes high priority for the program by using "prime time."

Schools just beginning advisor/advisee programs, especially those who are implementing other new programs as well, might consider starting with a three-times-a-week program, with a commitment to extend it to five times a week in a year or two. This transitional strategy can provide time to do the job well, thus building enthusiasm for the program.

## Role of the Principal and Guidance Counselor

As is the case with most middle school programs, the commitment and support of the principal is paramount to the success of an A/A program. The principal must understand its importance and potential for both advisee and advisor, be knowledgeable about its structure and methods, and genuinely want it to work. Translated into practice, this means reading, visiting other schools, providing resources, allocating appropriate time in the schedule, working closely with the school counselor(s), assistant principals, and advisory committee, delegating responsibilities, and a host of other supportive behaviors.

The guidance counselor, ideally the resident expert on early adolescent development, is the person most often in charge of the A/A program. Like the principal, the counselor has to be knowledgeable, committed, work closely with others, and perform numerous duties. In schools with multiple counselors, these duties can of course be shared. It is crucial that the counselor feels "ownership" of the program, realizing that it can and should be the single most important component of an overall guidance program, not an intrusion or another "added duty." Wise principals find ways to relieve counselors of nonessential chores so they may have more time to facilitate the program.

There are a number of specific leadership roles the counselor may take in developing and maintaining substantive advisory programs. A chief role includes planning, usually in concert with a committee, the

goals, objectives and structure of the program, as described in the next section. The counselor also helps to gather, design, and distribute appropriate A/A activities, and prepare faculty for their use. Conducting inservice sessions, in particular those which help faculty develop active listening and group facilitation skills, is especially helpful in this regard, Further, the counselor meets with teams or other groups of advisors on a regular basis to help with advisory session planning, and provides support and assistance to individual advisors who are having difficulties. Finally, the counselor may serve as public spokesperson for the program to parents or community groups.

## Planning a Program

An advisor/advisee program seems relatively simple but is deceptively complex. Many authorities in fact regard it as the single most difficult middle school organizational component to implement. Lack of time, commitment, understanding, and preparation are some of the reasons for this assessment. Hence careful planning is in order. While the time required for effective planning varies, many schools have found one year in advance of program implementation to be workable. The following are some recommended steps for a district-wide planning process which can be adapted by individual schools.

1. Form a steering committee to oversee the planning. The committee might include a central office representative and board member in addition to building administrators, counselors, teachers, and in some instances, students. Obviously, the committee must become knowledgeable.
2. Write a short mission statement with goals and objectives, and seek board approval for it. A written, approved statement not only gives a program direction; it may establish and protect it from being eliminated by the idiosyncrasies of future principals or central office administrators.
3. Establish details of the overall program including grouping, schedules, and tie-ins with other programs.
4. Make a general curriculum plan that addresses topics to be covered, materials available, activities to be planned by staff, relation to teams, etc.

5. Formulate an implementation plan designating events, dates, and persons responsible.
6. Provide extensive staff development that addresses the nature of the program and roles to be performed, familiarizes faculty with curricular activities and options, and offers opportunity to learn skills and to "practice" activities.
7. Develop a building-level support committee, made up of administrators, counselors, and teachers, for ongoing program maintenance and improvement.
8. Implement the program.
9. Develop an evaluation plan. In addition to informal observations and discussions, formal surveys which ask teachers, students and parents to rate and comment upon specific aspects of the program, are recommended.

## Conclusion

The considerable time and energy spent in developing an advisor/advisee program are decidedly worth the effort. If done well, an A/A program can transform the climate and relationships in a school, making other programs and activities more effective in the process. As Burkhardt and Fusco (1986) state, "Our advisory at Shoreham–Wading River functions as the heart of the school. It pumps life into the entire system. Everything flows from it, and its effect can be felt throughout the day" (p. 22). One of their eighth graders adds,

> Advisory means a lot to me. It's a time to talk and get ready for working. It's a time to share questions and some problems. But usually you talk to your advisor about problems. It is also a time to find out what's happening in school. Without an advisory I would be so confused about all my work and what's happening in school. (p. 29)

We live in a world that is often lonely and uncaring. We owe it to our students, as well as ourselves, to create an atmosphere of warmth and acceptance as best we can. Well conceived advisor/advisee programs can play a key role in this effort.

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## Selected A/A Curriculum Resources

### Printed Materials

*QUEST: Skills for Adolescence.* Quest International, 537 Jones Road, P.O. Box 566, Granville, OH 43203-0566. Full middle school program.

*F.A.M.E. (Finding Acceptance in the Middle School Environment).* School Board of Alachua County, 620 East University, Gainesville, Florida 32601. Separate activity booklets for grades, 6, 7, and 8.

*Prime Time*. National Resource Center for Middle Grades Education. University of South Florida, College of Education, EDU 115, Tampa, Florida 33620. Separate activities for grades 6, 7, and 8.

## PBS Videotapes

"Inside Out." (Thirty 15-minute shows) and "Self Incorporated." (Fifteen 15-minute shows). Both available from some state departments of public instruction, or from Agency for Instructional Technology, Box A, Bloomington, IN 47402-0120.

"DiGrassi Junior High." Can be taped directly from PBS, or tapes available from: Direct Cinema Ltd, Box 69799, Los Angeles, CA, 90069. (213-652-8000). Discussion guides are available from Discussion Guide, Box 2222 DG, South Easton, MA 02375.

"Wonderworks." Can be taped directly from PBS, or tapes available from Wonderworks, 4802 5th Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15213

# A Mentor Program for Beginning Middle School Counselors

**Sandra DeAngelis Peace**

Counselor mentor programs are underway in various parts of the United States. These programs facilitate counselor induction into the public school system by assigning experienced, successful educators, who are trained as mentors, to work with new counselors. The purpose of this article is to suggest a new induction model that addresses the concerns of middle school counselors during the first year of employment.

## Introduction

There is a clear trend emerging in the majority of states to increase the number of school counselors. Paisley and Hubbard (1989) surveyed all 50 states and the District of Columbia. With a 100% response, they found that 28 states had increased school counseling positions in the last five years, and that 32 states plan an increase in the next ten years. The most prevalent reasons for the increases included: "rise in the number of elementary and middle school positions, increased student populations, recognition of benefits of school counseling for high risk students and state mandates" (Paisley & Hubbard, 1989, p. 66).

Along with large numbers of counselors entering school systems, there is a trend toward increased emphasis on evaluation of counselor competencies. Both of these factors have implications for counselor education programs, counselor supervisors, and for the professional and personal well-being of the novice counselor. These trends in public education provide an opportunity, and indeed create a responsibility, to offer an induction program for beginning counselors.

## The Importance of an Induction Program

An individual faces certain inevitable development tasks during the initial phase of a career. Schein (1978) referred to "reality shock" as the period when a person experiences the differences between one's expectations and the reality of the job. He stressed the importance of accomplishing the task of becoming socialized in the organization by understanding the unique features of the organization and one's role in it. The individual's initial perceptions of this relationship have important consequences for the person's career (Schein, 1978). The issues of socialization and induction for teachers have received considerable recent attention. Driscoll, Peterson and Kauchak (1985) referred to this vulnerable time for teachers as a period when they "experience a number of psychological shocks, including frustration and feelings of isolation, lowered self-concept, lower aspirations for one's self in the teacher's role, and lowered expectations of pupils" (p. 108). After completing a study of two state-mandated teacher programs, Hoffman, Edwards, O'Neal, Barnes, and Paulissen (1986), strongly advocated formal teacher induction programs.

### Middle School Counselor Induction

Even though educators have written about teacher induction programs, there is little in the literature about induction programs for middle school counselors or for school counselors generally. To highlight the dearth of information, Matthes (1987) noted that even a national report (The Commission on Pre-college Guidance and Counseling, 1986) calling for counselor reforms did not mention the process of counselor induction. Matthes stressed the need for counselor induction programs to address new counselor initial role ambivalence, professional isolation, and general difficulty in practicing new behaviors. A study by Matthes (1987) found that beginning counselors' concerns centered around interpersonal dynamics with clients, teachers and parents. Few efforts existed to assist with these concerns, particularly from professionals trained in counseling. Matthes' investigation concluded that the most common mode of induction was the "sink or swim" approach. The new counselors were expected to operate as experienced counselors and little was offered for assimilating new counselors into their new roles. The lack of attention to an induction phase implies that a counselor is a

"finished product" and it ignores the importance of looking at counselor development as an ongoing process.

Beginning middle school counselors are by no means "finished products." The following are typical concerns expressed by the counselors early in the school year:

> "How can I possibly do everything I'm expected to do? My principal expects me to keep good records. Teachers expect me to see troubled kids. Parents expect me to return their phone calls. How can I do it all?"
>
> "Who is going to evaluate me as a counselor? The principal can't be in my office to see me counseling individually with youngsters. How will I possibly be judged fairly?
>
> "Are the kids going to like me? I don't want them to see me as someone who doesn't care."

If these concerns of beginning middle school counselors' problems go unresolved, they can contribute heavily to counselor stress. Methods of coping have been addressed in numerous publications, but what about a comprehensive program to act as a preventive measure early in a counselors' career? Mentoring can provide extra support and assistance to middle school counselors during their induction period.

## Mentoring as an Induction Strategy

The mentoring concept has historical roots from the time of Homer's *Odyssey*, where Mentor was responsible for nurturing the son, Telemachus. The benefits of mentoring in a variety of professions have been frequently documented (Gray & Gray, 1985; Kram, 1986; Levinson, Darrow, Klein, Levinson, & McKee, 1978). In the field of education, teacher mentor programs have appeared as a part of the effort to improve the quality of instruction (Glavez-Hjornevik, 1986) and are major components of the teacher induction process (Hawk & Robards, 1987; Reiman, McNair, McGee & Hines, 1988). Driscoll et al. (1985) contended that if a teacher mentor system is carefully designed, it can be of benefit to the beginning teacher, the mentor, the school district and to students. It seems reasonable to assume that beginning school counselors might also benefit from mentor programs.

## A New Approach to Counselor Mentor Programs

### Program Rationale

The goals of this new approach are based on cognitive-developmental research and theory, and recognize counselors and teachers as adult learners (Sprinthall & Thies-Sprinthall, 1983). Cognitive developmental theory is used as a framework because it recognizes that the task of helping another grow and develop is complex. Thies-Sprinthall (1986) cited studies indicating that "the helper (teacher, counselor, physician, nurse, principal) who can process experiences at higher-order stages of development performs more adequately as a supervisor" (p. 15). The focus of the cognitive-developmental model is to plan strategies to promote higher levels of thinking and problem-solving so as to enhance the performance of the complex tasks of teaching and mentoring. (Thies-Sprinthall, 1986). This model also uses a system (Joyce & Weil, 1980) to organize mentor skill training into training components. These training components are incorporated into the model along with conditions needed to promote psychological growth to form a Cognitive-Developmental, Teaching-Learning Framework, detailed in Thies-Sprinthall (1984).

The rationale for adopting this model in a teacher induction program can be applied to a mentoring program for middle school counselors. Just as in teaching, the tasks required for successful counseling require more complex functioning. Research has shown the significant relationship between a counselor's conceptual level and the level of a counselor's skills (Holloway & Wampold, 1986; Strohmer, Biggs, Haas, & Purcell, 1983). A cognitive-developmental mentor program emphasizes promoting growth and improving middle school counseling skills. The counselor mentor program offers technical assistance and support to middle school counselors during their first year of employment.

### Counselor Mentor Training

From a developmental point of view, what is true for counseling is true for mentoring. The task of successful mentoring requires complex skills. Thies-Sprinthall (1986) explained that a teacher mentor needs to have the ability to break down the process of teaching into manageable parts and model the skills of teaching. It follows that this is true for a counselor mentor. The Cognitive-Developmental, Teaching-Learning

Framework (Thies-Sprinthall, 1984) is used in the counselor mentor program as a fundamental guide. Adaptations and changes in the training format have been made to accommodate the unique aspect of counselor skills and the counselor mentor role. Mentor training is preceded by an individual relationship building conference conducted by the trainer. The trainer's purpose for this conference is to listen to the prospective mentor's concerns and identify that person's overall learning style. The counselor mentor training program addresses the following topics:

1. Building and maintaining a helping relationship
2. Adult development theory
3. Using models of supervision according to the needs of the beginning counselor
4. Levels of counselor concerns
5. Roles and responsibilities of the mentor
6. Problem solving
7. Cycles of supervision

## Role of the Mentor

The basic theoretical framework for the mentor training is used as the focus for the mentor's work with the beginning middle school counselor. The trainer models techniques that the mentor trainees can adopt when they begin as mentors for beginning counselors. The roles of the mentor, listed below, identify services that mentors provide to novice middle school counselor:

1. **Establish a helping relationship and maintain ongoing support.** The mentor conducts a relationship building conference with the new counselor using an adapted format from the conference conducted by the mentor trainer. The conference provides the mentor with information about the beginning middle school counselor's concerns, learning style and needs for assistance. An important purpose of the conference is to communicate empathy and support for the new counselor's concerns. Providing support is one of the key components to this model of supervision for promoting growth, along with experiencing challenge (Thies-Sprinthall, 1986).

2. **Provide individual assistance.** The mentor assists the novice middle school counselor with the planning and implementation of the school's guidance plan. The mentor acts as a consultant and provides ideas, materials and suggestions for resources. Support continues as an ongoing service throughout these contacts.

3. **Maintain relationships with other members of beginning counselor's support team** (principal guidance department chairperson, guidance supervisor). The main activity in this area is a Communication Conference arranged and facilitated by the mentor in the company of the beginning counselor and that person's principal. The purpose of this conference is to explain the mentoring activities, highlight the new counselor's school activities and discuss plans for the school's guidance program and ways the mentor can provide assistance.

4. **Conduct monthly meetings for all beginning counselors and mentors.** This service is a collegial approach to supervision and offers training about a specific counseling skill. Group support is another important goal of the meetings. The meetings provide networking opportunities and a chance for the beginning middle school counselors to offer their ideas and support, too.

5. **Provide assistance with specific counseling skills: Cycle of supervision.** A cycle of supervision includes a pre-conference, observation of a counseling activity, and a post-conference. Mentors often begin by conducting these cycles around one aspect of the middle school counselor's work (e.g., leading classroom guidance sessions or consulting with teachers and parents).

## Questions about Mentor Programs

Questions about mentor programs have been raised about mentor selection, the mentor's role in the novice's evaluation, type of mentor training, and the matching of mentors with protégés (Kram, 1986; Patterson, 1989). Some of these issues have been addressed in cognitive-developmental models, resulting in the formation and revision of program policies, mentor training, and the kind of assistance rendered to beginning middle school counselors. As mentor programs grow, these issues require continual attention. The length, content and structure of the training, and program accountability measures should be scrutinized regularly. It is important that the trainers and administrative staff look to this model's theoretical framework as a guide for future implementation and evaluation of the program.

## Implications for Supervisors

School system supervisors play an important role in a counselor mentor program. Supervisors are responsible for mentor recruitment and

selection, and matching mentors with protégés. As a member of a beginning middle school counselor's support team, for instance, the supervisor serves as a liaison with the protégé's principal and mentor. Supervisors also supply administrative support to the mentor trainers and collaborate with them about program policies.

A counselor mentor program has advantages for the supervisors and a school system's counseling program. The mentor's technical assistance reinforces skills which supervisors acknowledge as needed to implement guidance program goals unique to a particular school system. Supervisors have observed that middle school counselors who are mentored move much more quickly through initial concerns than those without such services, and therefore, are seen as more effective counselors.

## Conclusion

Cognitive-developmental mentor programs acknowledge that middle school counselors have needs for developmental beyond pre-service training, and especially during the critical induction period. The program recognizes that assistance can be provided by an experienced, successful peer who is trained to guide and support the novice counselor. There are, however, some issues that require ongoing attention. Formal evaluation of mentor programs is necessary to determine the degree of accomplishment of this program's goals. In the meantime, informal evaluations have pointed to the benefits to the beginning counselors and to a revitalizing experience for the mentors.

Middle school counselors reach out to a variety of audiences—students, parents and staff. With greater numbers of counselors expected to enter the field, it seems that it is time for experienced counselors to offer services to new counselors for their benefit and for the betterment of the profession.

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# Focus on Improving Your Middle School Guidance Program

James W. Costar

Few disagree with the notion that the primary function of any school is to help children learn and that the core of this activity is the instructional program, including the classroom teacher. In recent years teachers have focused much of their attention directly upon the pupil—the learner—looking for more effective ways to enhance the learning process; and yet, there still appears to be a growing reluctance of young people to learn. The most common manifestation of this attitude is poor school attendance, something which has now become almost epidemic. Not only do many students continue to leave school permanently at the earliest possible age, but among middle school students, there is an increasing number who absent themselves for one day or one week at a time. They say school is boring.

Much time and energy has been devoted by all educators in attempts to overcome this growing problem. The middle school movement itself is, in part, an effort to create an atmosphere conducive to better learning. New classes and class materials have been developed, new ways of grouping pupils devised, instructional techniques were modified, the length of class periods and the school year changed. And yet, most of what has been tried seems to have done little more than to help students tolerate boredom rather than eliminate the cause of it.

Shocking as the fact may be, school work still does not seem relevant to most young people in spite of monumental efforts made in the 1960s and 70s. Gradually, educators at the K–12 levels have come to realize that a large part of "relevancy" is in the minds of students and that teachers cannot make things seem relevant to young people who do not have sufficient insight into their own present and future needs. Educational relevancy requires considerable personal planning; and in order to do this well students must first know "who they are" by coming to understand what things interest them the most, what aptitudes and skills they possess, and which direction in their life will be most profitable and

satisfying for them. Helping them acquire these understandings is an important part of the guidance function of the middle school.

Thus, the primary goal of the middle school guidance program is to help students find meaning in their lives; and by this means, find relevancy in what schools have to offer them. A sense of relevancy is accompanied by higher motivation to learn and, as a consequence, greater achievement. Good teachers have always known this, and continually seek more effective ways of making the subject they teach meaningful to their students. An effective developmental guidance program helps them accomplish this important task.

## Clarifying the Purpose

In the beginning, considerable confusion regarding the goals and structure of middle school guidance programs existed among those who were in charge of them. Fully aware of their responsibility to assist each pupil in "bridging the gap" between childhood and adolescence—between elementary school and high school—middle school staffs found it unwise to fully adopt the design of guidance programs at either of the other two levels. Nevertheless, because of insufficient research on and practical experience with middle school guidance, many did look to crisis-oriented high school programs for certain practices which were either adapted for the middle school or adopted without change. Often it was a serious mistake. Not only did such practices simply perpetuate some high school mistakes of the past but, in addition, failed to give sufficient consideration to the unique characteristics of 11–14 year-old children for whom the middle school was designed, not the least of which were the developmental needs of these emerging adolescents.

At the juncture between elementary school and high school, the middle school is in a position to combine the best of elementary school guidance (with its emphasis upon continuous developmental teacher-oriented activities) and the strengths of high school programs (characterized by highly trained guidance specialists who emphasize counseling with individuals and in small groups). Such combinations are more easily brought in line with the fundamental purpose of the middle school and have as their primary basis: 1) a developmental approach which stresses **prevention** of learning difficulties rather than **treatment** of disabling conditions, and 2) an organizational structure in which the

classroom teacher is the focal point of guidance services for both pupils and their parents. Both points are supported in a *Policy and Position Paper on Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling Programs* adopted by the Michigan State Board of Education in 1987.

## The Developmental Approach to Guidance

There are those who have advocated for years that more time and money be spent on the preventive aspects of guidance, never quite realizing that although developmental guidance is preventive, prevention alone does not necessarily result in human development. In fact, there are times in our schools when efforts at prevention may actually inhibit pupil development—e.g., student conduct regulations, required courses and rigidly scheduled activities. Regretfully, efforts to prevent problems from developing often prevent pupils from developing.

At the present time, there are several areas where discrepancies exist between what educators believe about good developmental guidance programs and what is typical in our secondary schools. For instance, it is commonly believed that:

1. **Developmental guidance programs are integrated with the total school program,** but most programs still operate, for the most part, as a separate department of the school consisting only of counselors.
2. **Developmental guidance programs provide every staff member with a guidance function to perform,** but the emphasis today is on the work of counselors. It is a common misconception in our secondary schools that the counselors are the guidance program.
3. **Developmental guidance programs stress self-understanding by the learner,** but our guidance activities center more often around the staff's understanding of pupils.
4. **Developmental guidance programs are long-term and continuous from the time children enter school until they leave,** but only little attention is given to the maintenance of strong programs at the middle and elementary school levels. Instead, help is directed to the high school where the need is greatest because problems are often more severe.

5. **Developmental guidance programs help students learn how to make wise decisions for themselves,** but insufficient effort is being made to help students develop in all areas needed for wise decision-making.
6. **Developmental guidance programs focus on preparation and planning,** but in many middle schools there is still little more than talk about collaborating with parents in helping children develop a sense of direction in their lives. Most programs are reactive (crisis oriented) rather than proactive (planned).
7. **Developmental guidance programs exist for all children,** but the limited resources available are usually directed more toward the needs of children with serious problems than those with normal developmental concerns.
8. **Developmental guidance programs enhance the total development of children,** but it has become popular to emphasize personal and social development while neglecting academic-vocational development.

## Administrative Concepts

The term guidance has been used to describe many different processes, philosophies, and activities. Since it is often interpreted so loosely, it has given rise to many district formats in middle schools. However, there are a few widely accepted concepts related to the administration of an effective guidance program.

### A Guidance Program is a Program of Services

Many definitions of guidance can be found in the related literature. Most of them refer to it as a process or as an activity which is concerned with the total development of students. This would seem to be the goal of all educational experiences. The difference then between guidance and the instructional function of the school is not always easy to discern—depending, to a large extent, upon the goal associated with an activity, i.e., the reason it is being performed.

For most it is easier to envision the guidance program as a program of services—services which are easily defined, administered and evaluated. It is then possible to describe a guidance program as those

services specifically designed to facilitate the growth and development of pupils. A description of each guidance service will be found later in this booklet.

### Guidance Services Are Facilitating Services

Frequently, the guidance program is thought of as something apart from the instructional and administrative functions of the school. As such it would be of doubtful merit. The primary role that a program of guidance services must play is that of making the instructional function more efficient and effective, i.e., facilitating the primary function of the school, helping children learn.

### Guidance Services Are Not an Added Activity

Expanding guidance services should not be thought of as just an added responsibility, but rather, as a change in priorities if such a change is made, it should be judged on this basis: "Will this change make our efforts more meaningful to the individuals in my room?" It then becomes a question of which of the many things being done do the most to enhance the total development of every child?

### Guidance Services Are Primarily Preventive in Nature

One important aspect of an effective guidance program is the prevention of problems before they arise. Finding and helping youngsters remove minor obstacles to their development before they create major problems is a high priority objective in all guidance programs. This does not mean that guidance workers in such programs avoid problems of severe maladjustment in some students; but rather, such cases become fewer in number and are handled primarily by other means inside or outside the school system, e.g., special education or community agencies.

### Guidance Services Need Specialized Personnel

In spite of the unique position and qualifications for offering guidance services to their pupils held by classroom teachers, it is apparent that highly trained guidance specialists are also necessary. Staff members, including counselors, social workers, nurses, and psychologists, are always needed to provide the kind of remedial or therapeutic aid for

some pupils which is beyond the training, experience or time allocation of a typical teacher.

### Guidance Programs Require Coordination

If all pupils are to have an equal opportunity to use available guidance services and if such services are to be administered in an efficient manner, continuous coordination of the guidance activities of all persons within the school is necessary. In addition, the guidance program in each building must be carefully articulated on a system-wide basis with those in other elementary, middle and senior high schools as well as with agencies and referral persons outside the system.

## The Guidance Services

### Objectives

Many different organizational patterns are used in providing guidance services in middle schools. Because of differences from school to school in available resources, levels of staff development and need priorities of students, differences in program organization should be expected. However, the structures of most guidance programs reflect a desire to attain seven widely accepted operational objectives:

1. To collect from and interpret to all individual pupils personal data which will help them better understand themselves and, thus, to make more valid decisions related to personal growth and development.
2. To furnish to and interpret for pupils and their parents certain kinds of personal, social, educational and vocational information useful in making long-range plans.
3. To provide individuals and groups of students counseling assistance in acquiring insights and drawing conclusions.
4. To analyze and, when necessary, alter the home, school and community environment of pupils in order to improve their personal, social and academic adjustment.
5. To aid individual students in planning for and adjusting to post-school life.

6. To continually assess and evaluate the effectiveness of the guidance services offered for students and their parents.
7. And finally, to make certain that for every child there is an adult in the school who knows him or her well and carefully monitors that child's progress.

In order to reach these objectives, the following guidance services are provided.

## Pupil-Inventory Service

**The Pupil-Inventory Service** is concerned with a careful and systematic study of each student in order to personalize his or her educational program as much as possible. It includes all the tools and techniques used to obtain various types of information about every pupil. Devices such as questionnaires, autobiographies, sociograms, standardized tests, anecdotes and procedures for recording and interpreting pupil data make up the major part of this aspect of a guidance program.

## Information Service

**The Information Service** is composed of three very closely related areas. Each consists of a different type of information students need for personal growth, including educational, vocational, and personal-social information. Vocational information outlines the world of work; educational information describes educational programs inside and outside the school while personal-social information is that which will help children in understanding their own behavior and that of their peers and parents.

## Counseling Service

**The Counseling Service** consists of competent personnel, facilities and time provided so that every pupil will have help in analyzing his or her concerns or plans for the future as the need arises. Because it is based on the notion that the counseling process is an individualized activity, this service emphasizes conversations with students on a one-to-one basis and in small homogeneous groups.

### Placement Service

**The Placement Service** is an integral part of the total guidance program and includes both educational and vocational placement. Since few middle school children hold jobs, even on a part-time basis, vocational placement activities are seldom found at this level except on an informal basis. Educational placement gets more attention. It includes efforts made by the staff to place students in those classes of greatest benefit to them and where the teaching techniques used match their unique cognitive styles.

### Follow-up Needs Assessment Service

The Follow-up Service is concerned with problems, successes, failures and suggestions of pupils after they have graduated or moved to a new grade level. Since the vast majority of middle school pupils go directly to the high school, formalized follow-up of a pupil's stay in the middle school is that done by individual classroom teachers keeping in touch informally with their former students. This service, however, should not be overlooked. A follow-up of former middle school students now in the high school can prove extremely helpful to the staff in improving educational programs for future students.

The accountability movement in education, with its emphasis upon management by objectives, has made the continual assessment of the needs of students an essential aspect of providing relevant educational programs and services for them. Assessment of the needs of the guidance program itself is also an important element in an effective follow-up service and is addressed more fully in the following section.

## Designing an Effective Guidance Program

Current stress upon "accountability" in education is having a significant impact upon guidance programs at the middle school level. Widespread criticism of junior high school counseling has given impetus to efforts at developing new approaches to guidance services for pre-teenage pupils. These, in turn, have had a strong influence on the middle school movement itself.

Because of the uniqueness of their philosophy and their emphasis upon the social and psychological aspects of learning, middle schools

have provided fertile ground for the development of new and more effective delivery systems for counseling and guidance, including the teacher-advisor concept mentioned earlier. Although the guidance program has always had an important role to play in helping middle school students reach the maximum of their potential as human beings, the relative importance of this function has increased dramatically during the past few years. As a result, middle schools have assumed a leadership role in the design of many new aspects of this important area of education.

## Revitalizing the Guidance Program

The press for better management in our nation's schools has caused both parents and educators to give more attention to their guidance programs. Many have concluded that it is the most neglected school program. For those who wish to ensure that the guidance services of their school will adequately meet the needs of the pupils they serve, the first question often asked is: Which needs of students should our schools try to meet? Followed by: What priority should be given to each need?

To the degree to which the goals and objectives of the school already reflect the developmental needs of its pupils, guidance services have only to facilitate their attainment. In that sense, the guidance program is, as it should be, an integral part of the total school effort. Programs with objectives that are not consistent with the general philosophy and goals of the school are sooner or later judged to be a "fifth wheel" and are either abandoned or severely restricted during periods of economic crisis. Thus, the first and most important step in revitalizing a guidance program is to assess the relative strength of the physical, psychological, social, and intellectual needs of the students being served in order to determine the highest and lowest priorities among them. With this information about the basic needs of their students the staff can more easily determine which services should receive the greatest emphasis (strongest needs) and from which human and financial resources can be diverted (weakest needs) if necessary.

### Assessing Pupil Needs

It is not always essential to survey the entire student body. Most teachers already have a fairly accurate perception of the needs of the pupils in their classes. A ten percent sample of students may be all that is needed

to confirm beliefs already held by the staff or to indicate that a more extensive assessment should be made in a specific area. Some find it helpful to ask the teachers in a more systematic way what the priorities should be, and many means have been developed for collecting such data, the two most common being personal interviews and written questionnaires. Neither need to be elaborate nor time consuming to be helpful. With a few modifications the student questionnaire can be used with parents and teachers to assess their perceptions of pupil needs.

## Agreeing on Goals and Priorities

Having collected the needs assessment data, the next step is to translate this information into a set of understandable goals for the guidance program, acceptable to the professional staff as well as students and parents. Typically there will only be seven or eight broad goals similar to those found later in this booklet. A means can then be easily devised for the staff, school board and parents to establish a system of priorities by which resources will be assigned to and time allocated for each of them. A form developed for this task can be found in Figure 1.

## Implementing the Program

A serious effort to improve the guidance program of any school can be both costly and time-consuming; however, neither is rarely the case. Much is probably already being done well though the staff is not fully aware of it. Even so, it is hard to find a guidance program that cannot be improved if the staff is willing to make the effort. The following is a list of principles which are sufficiently valid for all guidance programs to serve as a basis for developing a sound administrative guidance structure in any middle school.

1. Guidance services, in some form, are in all schools though they may not be labeled as such.
2. Every guidance program must be individually tailored to fit the unique characteristics of the students and staff of the the school in which it operates.
3. Every staff member has a role to play in providing guidance services to pupils and their parents.
4. The effectiveness of the guidance program increases as fast as the development of the staff.

**Figure 1**
**A Statement of Tentative Goals for the Guidance Program**

| Students should be assisted in: | RANK 1 High 7 Low | RATE See Scale Below |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Attaining an educational experience relevant to their needs and to the full limit of their interests and potentialities. | | |
| 2. Acquiring effective techniques in working with others, both peers, and adults. | | |
| 3. Becoming acquainted with ways of providing a livelihood, obtaining employment and succeeding in it. | | |
| 4. Developing an ability to assume civic responsibility, including acceptance of self and others. | | |
| 5. Developing fundamental behavior patterns conducive to good physical, mental and social health. | | |
| 6. Developing effective ways of using leisure time. | | |
| 7. Developing better self-understanding, self-direction and self-discipline. | | |

**Programs Needs Assessment**

To conduct a current assessment of the guidance program, rate each of the above goals on the following scale. Then calculate the average score for each goal. The lowest scores tell you where there is much to be done. The highest (13–14–15) tell you where you might get the resources and time to make improvements.

| Extremely poor | Poor | Fair but needs improvement | OK leave as is | Too much being done |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1–2–3 | 4–5–6 | 7–8–9 | 10–11–12 | 13–14–15 |

5. A guidance program develops to the extent that the school administration and Board encourages and supports it.
6. An effective guidance program requires trained leadership.
7. The guidance program must be evaluated against its ability to facilitate the work of both teachers and administrators.

## Role of the Principal

Probably the most important person in the development of a good guidance program is the building principal. Without strong and continuous leadership from the principal, who is ultimately responsible for all programs in the building, little can be accomplished for the guidance program.

In the past, many building principals have ignored their role in the development of guidance services or, at least, have turned over that responsibility to the counselor. Although counselors can be of considerable help in organizing, administering and evaluating guidance services, principals cannot reassign these responsibilities entirely. It is through active personal participation by the principal that the staff becomes confident the priorities which have been established will be carried out and that it will be worthwhile for them to spend time and energy in an effort to improve the counseling and guidance program. Leadership by the principal is especially important in the following areas:

1. Establishing a written philosophy and related goals for the guidance program which are consistent with the overall philosophy and goals of the school.
2. Obtaining financial support for guidance staff and services.
3. Assigning competent and dedicated staff.
4. Acquiring suitable facilities, equipment and materials.
5. Providing certain counseling and guidance services for which he or she is personally most qualified.
6. Encouraging staff participation in regular in-service training for guidance activities.
7. Supporting continuous evaluation of the guidance program and related support services in the community.

## Role of the Middle School Counselor

The most important and unique aspect of the guidance program is the counseling service. Because all guidance services, to be truly effective, must ultimately be tailored to meet the individual needs of each pupil, conversations on a one-to-one basis are essential. These require time set aside for talks with individual students, locations where uninterrupted discussions can be held in an atmosphere conducive to thinking, and adults with special skills who are able to assist counselees in analyzing their perceptions, attitudes, and feelings—particularly as they relate to decision-making and evolving valid plans for their own development. This is the main work of the counselor.

The middle school counselor is a staff member with specialized knowledge and ability who provides assistance to students in making decisions that ensure an orderly progression through the various stages of their personal growth. At certain periods in the life of all children they must accomplish corresponding developmental tasks in order to proceed to the next level of their total development: mental, physical, social, and vocational. Arriving at valid insights required for successful accomplishment of each task requires that children and their parents carefully identify, and weigh for their relative importance, the various factors associated with choices to be made. The school counselor possesses those skills and personal qualities which facilitate this decision-making process and spends the major portion of his or her time each day conferring with individual pupils about their unique concerns.

As is pointed out in a later section devoted to the guidance responsibilities of classroom teachers, counselors are not the only ones in the middle school who help students make plans and resolve problems or concerns. The level of skill that is needed depends upon the complexity of the problem. Teachers, administrators, secretaries, aides, peers of friends and parents may also help. However, no guidance program can be expected to reach its full potential without the services of a fully trained counselor.

Though all school counselors are expected to have many of the same basic skills, middle school counselors do have certain characteristics and abilities which make them especially adept at working with preadolescent youth. Just as guidance programs at the elementary, middle and high school levels all must vary somewhat in their emphasis in order to reflect the gradually changing needs of growing children, so must the

role and function of the school counselor vary at each level. Variations in emphasis among the following primary responsibilities of school counselors will be found from school to school as well as grade level to grade level.

1. **Collecting Data About Pupils.** Gathering, analyzing, and recording information about students which is helpful to teachers, administrators, parents, and guidance specialists.
2. **Consulting with Teachers, Administrators and Other Specialists.** Discussing normal growth and development problems as well as problems of special concern to individual pupils.
3. **Collaborating with Parents.** Reviewing, from time to time, the long-range educational plans for their child and assisting them with problems of immediate concern to them.
4. **Counseling with Pupils.** Meeting with pupils, both individually and in groups in order to provide additional help to those who need the assistance of a staff member with more time and training for counseling than the typical classroom teacher and to make referrals both within and outside the school system.
5. **Conducting Research Studies Related to the Guidance Program.** Collecting and analyzing data describing the nature of the student body and the community served by the school that is useful in evaluating the degree to which the total school program meets the needs of all pupils.
6. **Coordinating all Guidance Services Available to Pupils in the School.** Making all services within the school and community easily accessible to every pupil who can profit from them.

Increasing the participation of teachers in the guidance program as described in a later section can have a significant effect on the role of the counselor. Where teachers are active guidance workers there is greater need for coordination, supervision and provision of in-service training by certified counselors. One can also expect that the number of referrals from the teaching staff will increase.

## Models for Middle School Guidance Programs

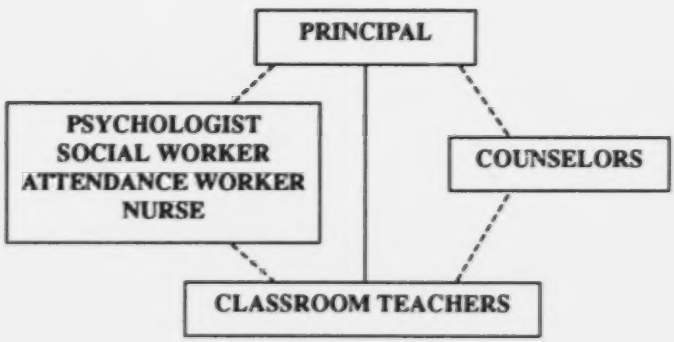
When considering a suitable structure for delivery of guidance services to middle school youth, thought must first be given to the other student services available within the school district. Because of the relatively

small number of pupils needing the help of a school psychologist, social worker, hearing and speech therapist, nurse or attendance worker, these pupil personnel specialists ordinarily spend only part of their time in a single building, and are usually housed in a more central location within the district. It is when the entire specialist team is joined with teachers and administrators that the guidance function of the school is carried out most effectively.

Of course, the simplest and oldest program arrangement is when the principal and teachers alone provide whatever guidance services they can through the curriculum and regular activities of the classroom. However, a guidance program of this nature does little to make certain that each child will be provided his or her fair share of continuous high-quality guidance assistance geared to their specific stage of development. This type of program only works when classes are small and homogeneous in their make-up.

A more common model today is similar to that found in Figure 2. Here the staff is assisted by one or more counselors working with other members of the pupil personnel team, especially when helping teachers with more difficult or time-consuming cases and the principal with administration and evaluation of the program. More often than not, the teachers in this approach assume less and less responsibility for guidance of their pupils over the years and the counselors eventually become the guidance program. In order to prevent this from happening and to

**Figure 2**
**The Guidance Team**



promote maximum efficiency as well as productivity, the teacher-advisor approach is now widely used in middle schools.

## The Classroom Teacher in the Guidance Program

The press for better management of guidance programs has caused a return to greater use of classroom teachers as a primary source of guidance assistance for students in both elementary and secondary schools, and it is interesting to note that the leadership for this movement came from middle schools.

The teacher-counselor concept, now usually referred to as either the teacher-advisor or the teacher-guide system, is not entirely new. Its roots are firmly established in guidance programs of the past. As recently as a generation ago classroom teachers were expected to provide most of the guidance services for pupils in elementary and junior high schools. The main reason for their use at that time was a shortage of trained counselors. Because partially trained teachers were being asked to do the work of fully trained counselors, there was considerable dissatisfaction with the arrangement. Rapid steps were taken to change this condition as soon as a larger supply of qualified counselors became available during and following the National Defense Education Act of 1958.

Today, the practice of using classroom teachers as guidance workers is again increasing in popularity—but for a different reason. Hiring full-time counselors has not proved to be the best way of providing all the guidance services needed by every student. In short, the rush to hire counselors to do the counseling led many schools to discontinue utilization of teachers as guidance workers in any capacity. Now we realize that both teacher and counselors have distinct guidance roles to perform which each is in a better position to execute than the other.

Having recognized this mistake, more and more school systems across the nation are redefining the function of classroom teachers to include emphasis upon the provision of those guidance services which they can provide for their pupils. At that same time, both pre-service and in-service training programs are being developed to help teachers become fully qualified to offer them. The middle school movement, with its stress upon individualizing instruction, facilitating the total growth and development of pupils, and humanizing the learning process, has been a major force giving strength to this new trend.

Since the primary purpose of the middle school guidance program is to facilitate the learning process, it is natural for the classroom teacher to have an important part to play. Even in schools employing counselors, it is neither logical nor practical to exclude teachers from the guidance program for there are many aspects of guidance which can be carried out either more efficiently or more effectively by them.

There are several reasons why this is so. First, the teacher spends a great deal of time with certain children each day and is in a good position to develop the kind of personal relationship with his or her pupils that is essential for implementing sound guidance practices. Second, because teachers have the same students each day, they are in a better physical location to provide guidance on a regular systematic basis. Finally, many guidance activities are better carried out within the context of related subject matter and learning activities of the classroom. This is not to say that guidance and teaching are synonymous; but rather, that the unique function of each enhances the other.

## The Teacher-Advisor Program

The teacher-advisor program is not intended to be a substitute for the school counselor. Nor is it designed as a replacement for guidance which has become a traditional part of regular classroom activities. Rather, it is intended to provide greater emphasis upon the guidance function of the school through a well-defined structure for group guidance activities which can be superficially defined, assigned, and evaluated, thus assuring that every child will be provided his or her fair share of guidance services at the time they are most needed. Without this more intensive organization guidance becomes an incidental part of the total school program and many children who need the help are overlooked.

The main objective of the teacher-advisor arrangement is to guarantee that for each child in the school there is an adult professional staff member who knows that pupil well and is in a position to continuously monitor his or her growth and development.

To accomplish this it is essential that only a small number of advisees be assigned to available staff members. It is easy to see that there can never be enough counselors *per se*. The whole student body must be divided among the entire staff, including administrators and counselors as well as classroom teachers. Such an arrangement usually makes it possible to limit each TA group to no more than twenty pupils, a

reasonable number for each advisor to know and monitor. If all teachers cannot participate the first year, then the usual practice is to start with the lowest grade level and include the upper levels during the succeeding years.

Any guidance activity that is judged worthwhile must have time provided for it. The amount of time required depends upon how well the staff is prepared. As mentioned in a later section, teachers must have clearly understood objectives, related materials, and the necessary skills. Success in implementing the program is enhanced by starting with a minimum amount of time allocated for teacher-advisor meetings (say one-half hour per week) and increasing the allotted time as the demand for it by teachers and students increases. It pays to be cautious when starting the program. Assigned time without adequate preparation can cause the program to regress to the ineffective homerooms of decades ago. During the first year or so short weekly staff meetings to go over the objectives and materials to be used during the following week builds confidence in the teacher-advisors that they will do a good job and helps maintain the high morale necessary for success of the program.

As pointed out earlier, the teacher-advisor program does not reduce the need for qualified counselors. In fact, it is more likely to increase the demand for their services since the counseling needs of each pupil are being more carefully assessed. Obviously the duties of the counselors do change as the teacher-advisors assume more of the guidance tasks that require little additional training and refer to the counselors more complex and time-consuming cases which they have discovered. In addition, leadership and in-service training for the teacher-advisor program falls naturally into the domain of the counselor though all are not immediately comfortable with this role.

## Teacher-Advisor Activities

The areas of guidance in which the classroom teachers and teacher-advisors have a significant role to play include: career development, educational planning, collaboration with parents, social development, and general school adjustment. In order to provide these, the teacher-advisor engages most often in the following activities:

1. Counseling in those cases where both the nature of the problem and the assistance required are within the training and experience of the teacher.

2. Collecting data about individual students useful in helping them overcome personal factors which hinder their ability to develop in a normal manner.
3. Modifying the classroom environment of a pupil when it has been determined that certain physical psychological, or social conditions are necessary to facilitate his or her growth and development.
4. Providing career information of all kinds, but particularly that which is related to the subject matter of the class being taught.
5. Adapting instructional procedures and techniques to meet the unique needs of individual pupils.
6. Providing educational information concerning school requirements and regulations, course offerings related to the teacher's instructional field, extra-curricular activities, and post-secondary education.
7. Assisting with placement in part-time jobs during the school year and summer as well as full-time employment after leaving school.
8. Influencing a given student with whom the teacher has somehow been able to establish a special personal relationship.
9. Participating in a continuous evaluation of the guidance services being offered by the school.
10. Helping with the organization and administration of the guidance program, particularly the coordination of guidance services for individual students within his or her classroom.
11. Collaborating with parents as they try to help their child with physical, social, emotional, academic and vocational development.
12. Referring students to counselors and other specialists when the help they need is beyond the ability of the teacher to provide it.

## Guidance Skills Needed by Teacher-Advisors

In each of the twelve areas above, teachers are in an excellent position to help students in their classes. Whether they are helpful or not depends, for the most part, upon the skills they possess. Although teachers sometimes feel inadequate in the guidance area, many already have sufficient training to work effectively with students who are in need of limited assistance. Difficult time-consuming cases do appear in all schools so well-trained counselors are also needed. However, as pointed

out earlier, counselors cannot be expected to do everything, even under the best conditions.

Thus, classroom teachers must possess a number of special skills in order to satisfactorily carry out their role as a guidance worker in the classroom. These skills include the following related to:

**A. Learning about Pupils**

1. Administering and interpreting standardized tests.
2. Administering and interpreting non-standardized techniques.
3. Recording data about pupils.
4. Sharing information with others in a legal and ethical manner.
5. Observing student behavior.

**B. Providing Information to Pupils**

1. Vocational information.
2. Educational information.
3. Personal information
4. Social information.

**C. Counseling with Pupils and Parents**

1. Individual interviewing techniques.
2. Group counseling techniques.
3. Collaborating with parents.

**D. Using Consultants**

1. Utilizing community resources.
2. Making referrals inside and outside the school system.

**E. Administering Guidance Services**

1. Assisting with the definition of guidance roles of staff.
2. Becoming familiar with evaluation procedures.
3. Providing helpful public relations activities.
4. Helping with scheduling and educational program planning.
5. Supervising para-professionals.

## Guidance in Groups

A basic characteristic of developmental guidance programs is the utilization of student groups. Many guidance services can be offered by this means; thus, it is important that classroom teachers involve those groups of students already a natural part of the school structure to provide guidance services. There are several advantages. Better use can be made of time, physical facilities and school personnel. In addition, the group

itself has characteristics which are helpful in nature. It can provide individual pupils with a supportive relationship based upon knowledge gained in the group sessions that many of their peers are concerned about the same problems and are using similar methods of resolving them. In the latter case, the group often provides an excellent means of facilitating individual counseling offered to participants. By this method, large numbers of pupils can also be made aware of the guidance services that are available to them and how they might make use of them. It should be pointed out, however, that group techniques are not a substitute for individual counseling. They are an excellent method of supplementing individual counseling and often increase the demand for such help.

## Group Activities in the Guidance Program

Getting groups together during school time to discuss a common problem is not an easy task. Many class schedules make it difficult for either teachers or pupils to free themselves at a particular time for a special meeting. A teacher-advisor program provides regularly scheduled time for group meetings. In addition, there already exists within the present structure of most middle schools a number of opportunities for extending guidance services to pupils in groups beyond regular classes or teacher-advisor groups. Some of the more common ones are listed below.

1. **Special Clubs.** Clubs formed because of the expressed interest by pupils in such things as music, art and science are ready-made vehicles for providing guidance services to their members. Such groups are an excellent means of helping children acquire new knowledge and skills by capitalizing on the high degree of interest and motivation held by members.
2. **Student Government.** Student councils and other forms of governing bodies, whether they operate within a single classroom or throughout the entire building, provide the guidance worker with many opportunities for encouraging students to analyze and act upon social problems with which they are confronted in their daily lives.
3. **Special Classes.** Occasionally, special classes such as those in career education, health, techniques of studying, physical education or certain subject matter areas are offered for students who

have special interests or are seeking assistance in problem areas not ordinarily covered in the regular school program.

4. **School Assemblies.** Assembly meetings are accepted activities in most middle schools. They offer any number of opportunities for providing children with information about the school, themselves and the world of work.
5. **Camping Programs.** Some schools have their own camping programs maintained both during the summer and regular school year. In others, national organizations such as the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and Red Cross, have been instrumental in setting up group guidance programs that operate in conjunction with schools.
6. **School Newspaper.** Supporting a school newspaper published for and by the pupils has a number of guidance possibilities. Not only does it provide an opportunity to work closely with the students who are responsible for gathering and writing the news, but it furnishes the teacher or counselor with an effective means of distributing guidance information throughout the entire student body.
7. **School Library.** School librarians have many opportunities to work with children in small groups. When their activities are coordinated with those of the regular classroom teacher and the counselors, they can become one of the most important members of the guidance team.

## Preparing the Teachers as Guidance Workers

Most classroom teachers like the idea of taking an active part in the guidance program. For them a major reason for choosing their profession was the satisfaction that comes from helping young people. However, a troublesome aspect of implementing a teacher-advisor program is the in-service training needed by the teachers.

The degree to which acquisition of the necessary knowledge and skills is of concern to teachers on the job is heightened by the fact that the skills must be applied at the very time they are being learned. However, it is also true that under these somewhat stressful conditions it is easier to identify the troublesome areas and to devise suitable in-service programs for correcting them. The four most common problem areas in the in-service training of classroom teachers for their role in the guidance program are helping them: (1) select a common approach

(philosophy) to guidance for their school's program from among the many that currently exist, (2) balance their teaching activities with those devoted to guidance, (3) form an effective guidance team with the counselors in their school, and (4) overcome normal forms of personal resistance to implementing their new role.

## Choosing a Philosophy

In order for teachers to adequately carry out their guidance role in a school, there must be agreement by the entire staff as to what the general goal of the guidance program itself will be. The overall aim must be consistent with both the stated goals of the school and expectations of the students and their parents. Selecting the most suitable approach for a middle school is usually not as easy as it may seem. There are currently at least four major categories to choose from: (1) those that stress selection and preparation for a vocation, (2) those that emphasize crisis intervention and problem solving, (3) those that stress humanism and humanitarian acts in all programs and activities of the school, and (4) those that promote a specific area of human development.

The task is made no less difficult by the fact that the best philosophy approach for a given school usually includes something from each of the four general areas. Thus, it is important that an in-service training program provide teachers not only with a comprehensive knowledge of the various philosophies of guidance found in middle schools today but, in addition, with preparation both to systematically assess the needs of their students and to reach agreement among themselves on the approach to guidance which is most appropriate for their school.

## Balancing Teaching and Guidance

It is easy for some teachers to become too enthusiastic about their role as a guidance worker. They are often heard to say: "My job is to be a counselor for my children." If this is so, who will be the child's teacher?

The most suitable apportionment of time allocated by the classroom teacher to teaching and to guidance is as difficult to determine for a specific classroom or school as it is to maintain. Many forces are at work, sometimes encouraging the teacher to spend more time on instructional activities and sometimes more on guidance. For instance, the desires of individual students are often in conflict with those of society in general. The priorities of a local school are sometimes different from

those of the larger governmental unit in which it operates. Children and their parents do not always agree; and finally, there is the question to be answered in every school as to whether students should be encouraged to make decisions regarding their life goals on the basis of reality as their elders see it or on their own dreams for the future. Support for the teachers in maintaining a satisfactory balance is provided by the underlying philosophy and organization of the guidance program in each school.

## Forming an Effective Teacher-Counselor Team

All to often classroom teachers envy or even resent school counselors. This is because they can see the possibility that counselors will take from them that part of teaching which they enjoy the most—helping students grow and develop.

Throughout the United States another aspect has contributed to the teacher's envy of school counselors. Very rapid growth of guidance programs during the thirty-year period from 1958–1988 placed the counselors in the educational spotlight where attention was continually drawn to their concern for the welfare of individual students and away from the same concern held by teachers and administrators. The effect was that teachers were often left with the impression that they are to tend to the teaching of subject-matter while the counselors tend to the needs of students. Of course that is an impossible arrangement and, as a result, feelings of animosity developed which interfere with establishment of a good professional relationship between teachers and counselors essential for an effective guidance team.

## Resisting a Guidance Role

Many teacher-advisor programs have failed simply because they were begun before the staff was ready. As was mentioned in an earlier section, most middle school teachers want a part to play in providing guidance services for pupils. However, they are naturally hesitant to participate when they are not adequately prepared. Experience with teacher-advisor programs in the United States has revealed several common causes for resistance on the part of teachers which are not unreasonable nor difficult to overcome. They usually form the basis for in-service training programs. Resistance may be the result of:

1. **Lack of Understanding.** Teachers are hesitant because they do not understand the difference between guidance and instruction, the changing needs of students, or the way in which the guidance program can be expected to have an impact upon students and the primary function of the middle school.
2. **Lack of Time for Guidance.** Most teachers already feel there is not enough time in the day even for teaching. Priorities must be realigned, and time must be set aside in the daily schedule so that all students and teachers can participate.
3. **Lack of Sufficient Skill.** Special skills are required for conducting guidance and counseling activities and most teachers do not feel confident that they are adequately prepared to assume an expanded guidance role. The most common teacher-advisor skills were listed in an earlier section of this report.
4. **Lack of Suitable Material.** Many guidance exercises require specific kinds of information and materials, e.g., occupational information and values clarification materials. These must be prepared well in advance of their use and special training sessions in their application may be required before teacher resistance is eliminated.
5. **Lack of Interest in Students.** A few teachers are just more interested in subject-matter than in students, and may always be. However, their reluctance to form a closer personal relationship with students often has other more subtle reasons such as the fear that such a relationship will cause the teacher to lose control of his or her class making it more difficult to teach.
6. **Resentment of Counselors.** Where counselors are already in the school differences between their role and that of the classroom teacher are often clearly established, usually with the counselors designated as the guidance person in the school. When the suggestion is made that the teachers should assume more of a guidance role they conclude that the counselor will have less to do and, of course, resent it.
7. **General Resistance to Change Itself.** All normal excuses for not accepting a new role can also be expected. Some will say there is too little time before retirement to make worthwhile the effort to acquire new knowledge and skills. Resistance to the person advocating the new role is also quite common. Others just feel guidance is not a part of teaching so they should not be expected to get involved.

8. **Fear that Students are Unprepared.** Many envision, and it is often so, that in the beginning middle school students will lack the necessary communication and problem-solving skills to successfully participate in teacher-advisor groups.

In the last analysis, guidance services are judged as worth the time, effort, and resources they require only to the degree to which they facilitate the main goal of the middle school, helping each child with all areas of their total growth and development—academic, physical, personal and social. Foremost attention must be given to the primary function of the classroom which is to help pupils learn. Over the years many forces have been operating to divert the main thrust of the guidance program for this central purpose of the school, and the teacher-advisor movement can be viewed as a successful effort to restore guidance and counseling as an effective component of all middle schools.

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# A View From the "Right": Who Needs School Counseling and Guidance Programs, Anyway?

**Sidney B. Simon**

I am weary of those "bleeding heart" liberals who criticize "right" minded people for making it increasingly clear that they simply cannot justify spending money for counseling programs in public schools. Serious budget constraints demand that money be placed where it can best serve the youth of this nation, and counseling programs can only be judged as frills of the most frivolous kind. Schools are for learning; they are not places for dealing with emotional problems that students just might happen to bring with them on the school bus. There are other agencies set up to deal with children's problems: these are for those rare millions of children who just might have problems or find themselves in trouble.

The truth is that society is working quite well. Any emotional problems of youth that once might have justified counseling programs have vanished from this land. The real issue is that College Board scores are embarrassingly low, and this problem must be addressed—but not by counselors, of course.

With this in mind, I offer ten reasons, described below, for eliminating counseling programs in the schools.

## Reason 1: The Healthy American Family

The American family has never been stronger. Students come to school from beautifully intact nuclear families where love, understanding, and abundant attentions of the most nourishing type are bestowed on each youngster. It is so fortunate that the "latchkey" youth of the past no longer exist; all children are now secure and come home from school to find both of their parents sitting together, cheerfully talking over the delights of their day, sipping hot cocoa with marshmallows in front of a cheery and cozy fireplace.

You ask about single parents? Where are they? Not sending children to our school. You ask about the impact of separation and divorce on the children? Not in our school. I will admit that at one time there were children who came to school bewildered, hurt, angry, and depressed because they were caught in the crossfire between two bewildered, hurt, angry, and depressed adults who did not have the resources to resolve conflicts and move on with their lives as a couple.

But with American families at the healthiest they have been in the nation's history, counseling programs that attempt to deal with dissonance in families and how it troubles children simply cannot be justified. Obviously, society must take the money that once went into such work and put it where it rightly belongs, into the basics, and must beef up homework and enforce stiffer grading systems.

## Reason 2: The Demise of Drug and Alcohol Abuse by Teenagers

Counseling programs are not needed because alcohol and drug use among students is at an all-time low. The majority of youths are simply into healthy and uplifting recreational activities and have turned their backs on addictive substances and any of the forms of chemical dependency. These days educators witness party after party at which high school students abstain from alcohol and drugs. Instead, they sip lemonade, and their gatherings are dominated by quiet discussions of computer languages and the latest foreign films.

Naturally, there are a few exceptions. Those students who do imbibe or take drugs somehow equate the word party with getting "plastered," "wasted," "smashed," "ripped," "bombed," "burnt," "blown away," "crocked," "snookered," or more often just plain drunk. Such students are clearly a minority and not a concern of the schools. Let those immoral few get caught up by the social service network established by the state. It's just not an issue for schools.

## Reason 3: The Absence of Suicide Among Youth

I can't find any reliable statistics that show that children are committing suicide or have suicidal tendencies. Although there has been some talk

about the warning signals a potential suicide victim sends out, often while at school, this is simply not the concern of teachers and other school personnel. They are there to teach! Using tax money in the schools to prevent suicide cannot be justified. People who want to take their lives are probably those who would have ended up on the welfare rolls anyway.

## Reason 4: Child Sexual Abuse Has Been Eliminated

No child I know of comes to school as a victim of child sexual abuse anymore. Of course, in the past I had heard the horrendous statistic: one out of four women would have experienced some form of sexual abuse by the time they reached the age of 18. That problem has been eliminated today.

All children now trip gaily to school, unscarred, unafraid, and completely relaxed about what goes on at home. There are no secrets that they can't tell anyone about.

Daddies don't molest their children. What an abominable idea! I just don't understand what all the fuss is about. It's probably a plot or a scheme to sell newspapers. No child comes to school with the secretive eyes, the avoidance behaviors, or that persistent, unexpressed guilt and rage that used to interfere with learning and growth. Who needs counselors for something that doesn't exist anymore?

## Reason 5: Peer Group Pressure: A Thing of the Past

It has been a genuine pleasure to witness the decline of peer group pressure in the mid 1980s. Students increasingly refused to wear what other students wore or to say or think what other students said or thought. Somehow, automatically, they became their own persons. They moved toward an autonomy that was marked by mature decisions, careful reassigning on all kinds of tricky personal issues, and an abandonment of faddish behavior of any sort. Several striking features of this reduction in peer group pressure could be measured. It was difficult to ever find students hanging out at the malls. Because of a lack of viewers, Music Television (MTV) went bankrupt, and if students used their "Walkman" cassette players, it was to listen to inspirational

messages from the leading pastors of the country. Strangest of all, the family telephone was free for hours at a time, because none of the kids needed to know what anyone else was going to wear the next day. Students worked hard at school and at home. Even the peer group language disappeared. Expletives went the way of those formerly ubiquitous expressions such as "Like, you know, right, you know, like." Without the problems generated by peer group pressure, who needs to pay salaries of counselors?

## Reason 6: Unwanted Pregnancies Disappear

The forces that eliminated sex education from schools have also provided this reason to eliminate counseling programs. Boys and girls today do not even seem to be curious about sexuality, and with this curiosity gone, none of the girls get pregnant. Much counseling time used to be spent dealing with the heartbreak of unwanted pregnancies, but, fortunately, sexuality in all of its evil forms seems to have disappeared from the lives of school-age youths.

Not only are teenagers refraining from experimenting with sexual activity, they just do not seem to be thinking about it. It was so clear to me that sex education, although often nothing more than information about reproductive organs, had in the past encouraged students to experiment; but with the elimination of sex education, pregnancies miraculously disappeared and counselors were free to do the more significant work of getting students placed in Ivy League colleges. I must be frank here, however. College placement is work that can be done by well-tutored clerks, and thus I argue, once more, that counseling programs can be eliminated as easily as unwanted pregnancies have been. (I mean eliminated as an issue: I'm not for abortion, obviously.)

## Reason 7: There Are No More Children of Alcoholics

Society has been so fortunate to have witnessed adults, who were formerly caught up in the problem of alcoholism, all marching off to join Alcoholics Anonymous. As a result, sobriety reigns in the country.

Consequently, the many children of alcoholics, with their shame, their secrets, and their social detachment, have also recovered. Why, you

may ask, do I mention social detachment? It used to be that children of alcoholics were never able to bring a playmate home, so they became detached from their peers. Who would bring a playmate home if he or she were to be embarrassed by parents who mumbled, stumbled, or tumbled out of control?

With the problem under control, is there any justification for wasting counseling budgets to share information on the disease of alcoholism or time to help a child who must return each day to a home where there is violence, no predictability, or constantly impending financial disaster?

If there were any youths with that situation to go home to, I would be the first to vote for money for alcohol prevention programs in the schools. But the problem does not exist. All youths return each afternoon to homes where promises are kept, where there is quiet and order, and where there is a safe and nurturing atmosphere. Of course, there are exceptions, but I don't believe it is that horrible to have alcoholic parents. It might even develop character. It's not such a horrible thing to be forced to act like the adult in the family, and it's not so tragic to be a child who never had a childhood.

In any case, school is not the place to talk about problems like that, even if they do exist, which they don't. Furthermore, alcoholism is a private and personal matter, and it is an abuse of a parent's privacy for a child to have a forum to talk about such things in school.

But all of this is academic, because research has shown that children now come to school without any of the alleged problems that develop because of alcoholism. These are the kinds of problems that were once recognized as coating a life with psychic debris and damage that will last a lifetime for children of alcoholics. Because there are no more alcoholics, there cannot be any children of alcoholics in the schools, so why have counselors scurrying around trying to find some lost child to help? I say eliminate those counseling programs.

## Reason 8: Children No Longer Drop Out of School

As standards for high school graduation went up, along with increased use of statewide achievement tests, demands for acquiring more knowledge spread to the lower grades. The focus on basics made school so much more fun, and the battle for grades made school more like an exciting game to go to; thus, absenteeism decreased astronomically.

Also, the emphasis on basics let students know exactly what was expected of them, so that they delighted in striving for higher achievement (like knowing the names of the Stuart kings in order or the eight major products of Pakistan). Although not everyone could make "A"s without lowering standards, students kept on working, learning, and pushing to memorize everything they could in every class.

The result, as educators rightly predicted, was that students no longer dropped out of school. Everyone stayed, and average daily attendance went off the charts. Each morning, eager, alert students came to school with the appropriate intrinsic motivation. These students were not frightened about failing, and all of them believed they fit in.

The holding power of the schools became so great that football players and other athletes neither felt better nor worse than the boys and girls who couldn't even do two push-ups. There was room for everyone, because each student believed that he or she was really invited to learn and each knew that school was the place to come early to and to stay late at.

One especially delightful fallout from all of this has been that there are no longer any students with learning disabilities. The youths who couldn't learn, whose tight little bodies grew rigid with failure, used to occupy so many counselor hours; well, they simply are not factors anymore. Everyone learns, everyone stays; so who needs counselors?

## Reason 9: There Are No Children With Weight Problems

I have never understood this misplaced compassion for students who either eat too much or too little. Such "bleeding heart" people give overbloated names like bulimia or anorexia or obesity to something that could be corrected with a strong whack over the knuckles by a parent. But here I am talking as if there were a problem when there is none. Everyone is probably a few pounds overweight. What's the big deal? So what, if the chubby kids don't like themselves, and what if they do get teased and ridiculed? No wonder they want their doughnuts and pizza.

But now all of the children are just the right weight and always demonstrate, just like their teachers, the highest state of nutritional wisdom. There is no longer a need to support programs that waste time on weight awareness meetings or any other kind of frills based on coddling children.

### Reason 10: All of the Adults Who Serve Children Work Together Cooperatively

This is the final justification for eliminating counseling programs. Counselors in the "good old days" were badly needed and spent much time and energy massaging wounded egos of staff and faculty, putting out brush fires among jealous, envious colleagues, and of course, protecting children from sometimes vicious teachers. But that is clearly a thing of the past.

Today, all school personnel work together in peace and harmony and express loving and nurturing support for each other. In such an environment, pettiness, backbiting, and gossip are rarely, if ever, heard. Thus, one more former role counselors might have had—peacemaking between warring factions in a school—is no longer a viable concern. Schools can now use the money that once supported those feeble efforts at parlor psychiatry for the real purposes of the school—learning, learning, and more learning.

## Conclusion

I hope I have convinced you that eliminating counseling programs in the schools is essential. All ten of my reasons boil down to one basic observation, an observation that makes it abundantly clear that society can no longer support counseling programs: There are simply no wounded, hurting, needy, deprived, dejected, depressed, abandoned, scarred, scared, damaged, or bewildered children any more. No one comes to school afflicted with any social or emotional damage these days. The following are the facts (or myths, as the pro-counseling people would call them):

1. Self-esteem in every child soars higher than the tallest buildings society has built.
2. Put downs, ridicule, or killer statements are never heard in schools.
3. Every child comes to school with a strong, family-instilled set of values. They all know what is right and wrong and they all act accordingly. (That's one of the reasons the forces on the "right" have struggled to keep counselors from doing values clarification. It's not needed. All values are already clarified.)

4. All students live whole, rich lives; their lives are focused on positive love, and they are committed to justice and the removal of injustice in whatever form it takes (e.g., racism, sexism, ageism).

Does anyone reading this see it otherwise? There is nothing to worry about. Any problems children might have had are now figments of some sob sister's paranoia. So join me in supporting the dropping, or eliminating, of all counseling programs. The "right" minded among us will all feel better doing that. Just look at today's youth. My question is: Do students need counseling programs or not? Who in his "right" mind or conservative budget would say yes?